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Theme:

THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO RENASCENT HINDUISM

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EDITORIAL

THIS number of *Religion and Society* consists of the papers which were either furnished as reading material in preparation for the Nagpur Seminar or presented at the meeting for discussion by the group. The Seminar had for its general theme, *the Christian Approach to Renascent Hinduism.* Nearly twenty-five people, most of whom are connected with various Theological Colleges in India, and some who are actively engaged in evangelism, participated. The meeting was held in the Christian Council Lodge, Nagpur, between October 13th and 17th, 1958. The daily programme and the list of participants are found elsewhere in these pages.

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WE have also published in this issue the Reports of the two Commissions into which the group was divided for part of the time, to facilitate fuller discussion of the two main aspects of the general theme. A limited number of reprints of these Reports are available, and they may be secured from the Office of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society. One of the suggestions made at the Seminar was that these Reports should be given wide publicity among Christians in India, and that simpler rendering in Indian languages of relevant sections of these Reports should be made available for members of local Christian congregations. Permission for this purpose may be obtained from the Director of the Institute. We shall be glad to have information about such attempts at translation of these Reports, and also about the nature of the response of Christian people at large in our country to this effort at understanding the new climate of religious life which is our present environment, and the context of thought-life in which the Gospel is to be preached with meaningful relevance.

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OUR primary intention in sharing this material with a wider Christian public is to invite further serious thinking on and closer study of this theme by interested individuals and groups. The times call for informed understanding of these issues involved.

For one thing, what is generally labelled Renascent Hinduism is not easily described in terms of credal content. There are, indeed, certain current affirmations of the living faith of Hindu intellectuals in our generation but they may not be expressed in neat credal formulæ. Rather, such assertions of faith are intended to provide the dynamic urge for the endeavour to re-order the structure of the Hindu social pattern and to charge with new content the categories of Hindu religious thought.

The new life of Hindu renascence is a pervasive fact spread out in varying measure throughout the vast expanse of *sanatana dharma*. It breaks out at almost every point, assuming different forms of expression in religious observances and social practices. But, more than all, it evidences an exuberance of conscious vitality and a newborn strength which is sensitive to criticism from without and censure from within. For Renascent Hinduism, at all levels of its manifestation, is not only resentful of what people of other faiths have to say; it is not less disturbed by reactionary tendencies in the country of Hindu orthodoxy and sectarianism, on the one hand, and the radical movements of secularistic humanism on the other, which decry all religion as meaningless superstition. So that exponents of contemporary Hinduism find themselves fighting at two fronts at the same time: against the world of good, religious folk who fail to understand the Hindu point of view in regard to religious verities; and against the world of the secular-minded folk, indifferent to spiritual values and defiant of the claims of the sacred.

* * * * *

THERE is some truth in the claim that the renascence of Hinduism in our generation should not only be viewed as a resurgence of the religion *of a* people but also to be regarded as an enlivening of religious consciousness *among* that people. There can be sociological and psychological explanations for this phenomenon. But if religious faith is to be regarded also in terms of response it would be difficult for the Christian to deny that these deep, inner stirrings of the human spirit are in response to the creative activity of the Holy Spirit. At best, we can only confess our inability to understand God's ways with us men: at worst, we must blame ourselves for our blindness in refusing to believe that God is equally concerned in the redemption of people other than

us, who may not wholly agree with our understanding of God's being, and His purpose for the world of His making.

Christians in India need to consider more seriously their responsibility in this regard. Our ignorance of our religious environment does not insulate us from its influence; nor does our indifference to it exclude us from its claims. The living faith of contemporary Hinduism makes a bold bid in our generation to give form and content not only to the distinctive pattern of our national being, but also to the total fabric of world culture. It is our task as Indian Christians to seek to interpret to our fellow Christians elsewhere the new affirmations and present claims of Hindu renascence, so that together we may gain a clearer understanding of the Christian mission and give meaningful content to Christian witness in our day.

There is, besides, another responsibility—of explaining to our Hindu kinsfolk just what our Christian standing ground is, especially in terms of the new religious categories that are gaining currency in contemporary Hinduism. For the fact remains, that, apart from the misapprehensions entertained by many Hindus concerning the motives and methods of the Christian Mission, they labour under similar misunderstanding of the nature and content of Christianity as we do of the beliefs and practices of Hinduism.

This is not to waver in our Christian convictions, nor to be unmindful of the gleanings of Christian theological insight and the fruits of Christian religious experience being harvested in other fields of the world-wide Church. It is rather to gird ourselves as Christians in this country today to new ventures, in faith, hope and charity—and the greatest of these still is charity. For the issues which emerge, when we get down to the onerous task of a Christian evaluation of the affirmations of Renascent Hinduism and a Christian appraisal of religions in general, make extraordinary demands on Christian charity which is characterised above all by creaturely humility, sin-conscious penitance and assured faith in the leading of the Holy Spirit.

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THE editors acknowledge with gratitude the assistance given by Father V. C. Samuel and the Rev. J. B. Carman, Research Fellows of the Institute, in assembling and editing the articles which appear in this issue.

THE RELIGIOUS AFFIRMATIONS OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT

By The Rev. V. C. Samuel

The most organized and vigorous Movement in modern Hinduism is the one that perpetuates the names of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda. Inspired by the life and teaching of the Paramahansa, his illustrious disciple founded the Movement immediately after the passing away of the great Master. It has now eighty-six centres in India and has so far extended its activities to countries like the United States, Argentine, the United Kingdom, France, the Fiji Islands, Mauritius, Malaya, Burma, Ceylon and Pakistan.

Two emphases which the Movement makes in relation to Christianity will help us to understand its religious affirmations. They are: (1) The Movement includes the spirit of the Christian faith. (2) From the point of universality, the Hinduism which the Ramakrishna Movement promotes, is superior to Christianity.

Including the Spirit of Christian Faith

Sri Ramakrishna believed that he had a *darshan* of Jesus Christ, and that he realised the essence of what the Prophet of Nazareth had come into the world to accomplish. As his biographers testify, Sri Ramakrishna realised the goals of religious search basic to Vaishnavism and Advaitism in Hinduism, and was able to say that they were the same. Subsequently, he was initiated into the innermost regions of Islamic and Christian faiths by being blessed with appropriate visions. Once Jesus Christ appeared to him and that unfolded to him the true nature of Christianity. Had not Christ himself testified that He and the Father were one? That unity between man and God which the Prophet of Nazareth had realised by a life of renunciation and detachment was vouchsafed to Sri Ramakrishna and he could say that the essence of what Christ had come to achieve was realised by him.

Sri Ramakrishna went further than claiming Christ to be his Lord. It was Christ's method that he adopted in giving a start to the Movement which perpetuates his name. His disciples say that during the last few years of his life he was very keen to found a brotherhood committed to proclaim the message of his life in

the world at large. The way in which it was done reflects the New Testament account of the beginning of the Christian community. The story is that about six months before his final *samadhi*, in January 1886, the Master had twelve of his disciples invested with monastic dress. " One evening," says the biographer, " the Master called the boys, the future apostles of the Ramakrishna Order, put them through a certain ceremony, gave the pieces of cloth and rosaries to them, and declared that thereafter they could take food from all, irrespective of caste and creed."[1] Of these twelve, the Master chose Narendranath, the future Swami Vivekananda, as the leader. The appointment of Narendranath to this position may be referred to here. A few days before his departure from the world, the Master called Narendranath to him. Not being able to speak, he wrote on a piece of paper, " Naren will teach others". Narendranath protested, " I won't do that". But the Master replied, " You must". Three or four days before the final departure, the Master called Narendranath to his presence and fixing his gaze on him fell into a trance. Narendranath felt as though something like an electric current flowing into him, and lost outer consciousness. When he came to, he found the Master weeping. On being asked the reason for this, the Master said, " O Naren, today I have given you my all and have become a pauper ! Through this power you will do great things, and only after that will you return to where you came from."[2]

Behind these stories there lies implicit the affirmation that what Sri Ramakrishna realised was the same as what Jesus Christ had experienced and taught. In other words, there is a real continuity between the spirit of Christ and that of the Ramakrishna Movement.

There is another idea which ought to be mentioned here. According to the Gospels, Christ rose again from the dead and He was a living presence to His disciples. The devotees of Sri Ramakrishna believe that they have the living presence of their Master. Since Sri Ramakrishna is continuous with Christ, his living presence is the living presence of Christ.

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[1] Gambhirananda: *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, . 37,
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 37–38.

The claim is clearly made basic to the Movement. After the death of Sri Ramakrishna, the Movement was inaugurated in this way.

> All this took tangible shape one night near an open-air fire of huge logs, lighted in the compound of the house. Late in the evening the young aspirants had gathered round it with prayerful hearts under the canopy of a star-lit winter sky in a setting of ineffable peace. The meditation lasted long. Then Narendra began to relate the life-story of Jesus Christ. He ran through all the anecdotes beginning with the immaculate conception and ending with the resurrection, emphasising at every turn the life of renunciation that Jesus lived. Then the brother-disciples *were introduced to the apostolic world, in which the grand message of redemption was carried to the ends of the earth by St. Paul and others.* And in an inspired voice he exhorted them to be apostles themselves to carry abroad the new message for the uplift and salvation of mankind, till they rose up in a body, with the blazing fire in front and shining stars above as their witnesses, to pledge themselves to a life of renunciation. The very air was filled with spiritual vibrations, and strangely enough, they recollected, at the end of it all, that it was the *eve of Christ's nativity.*[3]

So the Ramakrishna Movement believes that it stands in a straight line absolutely continuous with Christ and the apostolic age. No claim of organisational continuity is made here. For, according to Hinduism, continuity in religion is not confined to organisational limits. On the other hand, it is a spiritual continuity. If historical Christianity is willing to be satisfied with a continuity of this kind, so would the Ramakrishna Movement affirm, it will find affinity with the message of the Paramahansa.

All Religions True and Interdependent

This idea will lead us to the second emphasis of the Ramakrishna Movement in relation to Christianity. The Movement affirms that all religions are true, and that they need each other. So Vivekananda could say:

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[3] Gambhirananda: *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, pp. 50–51. Italics mine.

> I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship them all; I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the Mosque of the Mohammedans; I shall enter the Christians' Church and kneel before the Crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the heart of every one.[4]

At the same time, the Movement believes that Vedic religion has a greater right to be recognised as universal than any other religion. This point is made in two ways: (1) In the words of Vivekananda,

> Now a religion, to satisfy the largest proportion of mankind, must be able to supply food for all these various types of minds. In Society there are thousands of varieties of mind and inclination. For our practical purpose, it is sufficient to have them characterised into four classes. First, there is the active man, the worker; then there is the emotional man, who loves the sublime and the beautiful in an excessive degree. He wants to adore Love and the God of Love. Then there is the mystic whose mind wants to analyse its own self. Then there is the philosopher who wants to weigh everything and use his intellect even beyond the possibilities of all human philosophy. What I want to propagate is a religion which will be equally acceptable to all minds; it must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic and equally conducive to action. This will be the nearest approach to a universal religion.[5]

The Vedic religion provides for these four classes of people. No other religion has worked out systematically this four-fold path to *mukti*. If Christianity comprehends the principle behind this emphasis of the Vedic religion, it has to be admitted that it is a later religion.

(2) Jesus Christ, asserts Vivekananda, did not teach men and women to be satisfied with this world. "Not this life but something higher", was his emphasis. "The foxes have holes,

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[4] *Complete Works*, **2**, p. 372.

[5] Quoted from D. V. Athalye: *Neo-Hinduism*, pp. 161–62; where he has condensed *Complete Works*, **2**, pp. 384–85.

the birds of the air have nests," said Jesus, " but the son of man hath nowhere to lay his head." Therefore, avers Vivekananda, Jesus has no other occupation in life; no other thought except one that he was a spirit. Such an emphasis naturally leads to the question of the nature of spirit, and three positions are possible, namely, *dvaita*, *visistadvaita* and *advaita*. All these three positions have been expounded and defended by Hindu sages, and Sri Ramakrishna has realised them all. We can see that Jesus Christ had comprehended them all in his teaching. And Vivekananda commends Jesus and says that He achieved the harmony of the three positions.

> You find that all these three stages are taught by the great Teacher in the New Testament. Note the common prayer he taught " Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name". It is intended for the uneducated masses. To a higher circle who had advanced a little more he gave a more elevated teaching " I am in my Father and ye in me and I in you". And then, when the Jews asked him who he was, he declared that he and his Father were one.[6]

So according to Vivekananda, the principle which lies at the heart of Christ's teaching was part of Vedic religion. This fact, the Ramakrishna Movement would maintain, proves that before Christ ever came into the world Vedic religion had attained to the status of universality.

Claim of Universality for Vedic Religion

The claim of universality which the Ramakrishna Movement makes for Vedic religion has also a metaphysical basis which may be noted here briefly. The Vedic conception of Reality is neither theistic nor pantheistic, but it is panentheistic. This means that everything is in God. In other words, God is the ultimate principle on which the world and everything in it depend for their existence and being. This principle is spiritual—it is the Absolute. The empirical world is made up of time, space and causation, which have no bearing on the Absolute in its real being. Within the realm of time, space and causation, there are innumerable objects, which come and go. In speaking of the

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[6] Athalye's condensation of *Complete Works*, **2**, pp. 141–43. *See* Athalye *op. cit.*, p. 177.

Absolute we can employ the analogy of the ocean. The waves in it come and go. From the point of view of external observation, they constitute the ocean, though the fact is that in its real being the ocean is far greater than the waves. If we represent the Absolute by means of the ocean, the world with its manifold objects takes the place of the waves. So the world, if looked at from an empirical point of view, of the Absolute.

When this metaphysical theory is taken seriously, we can understand the claim of universality made for Vedic religion by the Ramakrishna Movement. As we saw, the Movement stands for religious harmony. And the harmony spoken of is that of three positions—namely, the *dvaita*, *visistadvaita* and *advaita*. As for the dvaitin, he believes that God is different from the world. The Ramakrishna Movement is of the opinion that there is truth in what he believes. The visistadvaitin thinks that God and the world form a unity, but that they are separate one from the other. He is also right. But beyond these two positions there lies the superior truth that God alone is real, and that the world is evanescent. The advaitin proclaims this truth, which comprehends and transcends the other two positions.

The Ramakrishna Movement preaches the message of religious harmony on the basis of a metaphysical thinking of this kind. It claims to accord a place for every form of religion to exist and flourish in the world. But the fact is that when once its idea of religious harmony is realised, religions other than Advaitism will have no appeal. At the same time Advaitism does not intend to replace them. On the contrary, it remains as a superior form of religious knowledge. The point may be explained in this way. Christ is the central figure in Christianity, and the Christian Church has developed a large number of rituals and symbols. The purpose of them all is to lead the devotee to realise what Christ had experienced. Acceptance of Advaitism does not mean that Christ or the symbols of the Church should be given up. But it means that, while accepting Christ and the symbols of the Church, Christians ought to see the superior truth Advaitism proclaims.

Common-Ground for all Religions

In this defence of Vedic religion, the Ramakrishna Movement draws inspiration, in our times, from the liberalist ideal of seeking

for a common-ground behind all religions. It stands on and promotes the outlook of the Philosophy-of-Religion-movement current in certain quarters in the West. The Ramakrishna Movement believes that the common-ground of all religions sought by these moderns had been found by Indian sages long ago, and that in Advaitism they had shown to the world the Crown of all religions. Since Advaitism does not intend to supplant other religions, it deserves the title universal more than any other empirical religion, including Christianity.

A claim of this kind has to answer the problems involved in human existence. This need has not escaped the attention of the leaders of the Ramakrishna Movement. In fact, they meet it in two ways. (*a*) In the traditional concept of *Maya*, they find an adequate basis for maintaining the reality of the world. (*b*) The Movement has a programme for active service in the world. We shall look into these two points a little further.

(*a*) Sri Ramakrishna is credited to have offered an interpretation of the concept of *Maya* which is worth noting here. According to him, *Maya* implies a meaning far more profound than what is ordinarily understood. The concept has two aspects. One represents the aspect of becoming as compared to being. The other symbolises the fact of evil and suffering in the world. Sri Ramakrishna referred to the first as *Vidya Maya*, and to the second as *Avidya Maya*. *Vidya Maya* emphasises the reality of the world. It is *Maya* divine, by means of which the divine *Sakti* produces a world of form and subject-object distinctions. Alongside of the *Vidya Maya* there is the *Avidya Maya*, which gives a basis for evil and death in the world of empirical apprehension. When caught up in the meshes of *Avidya Maya*, we should not be disappointed, ignoring the fact that we are at once in the realm of *Vidya Maya*.

This emphasis was made seriously by Vivekananda, who wrote:

> Thus we find that *Maya* is not a theory for the explanation of the world; it is simply a statement of facts as they exist, that the very basis of our being is contradiction, that everywhere we have to move through this tremendous contradiction, that wherever there is good, there must also be evil, and wherever there is evil, there is some good, wherever

there is life, death must follow as its shadow, and everyone who smiles will have to weep, and *vice versa.*[7]

Is there no hope then? True it is that we are all slaves of *Maya*, born in *Maya*, and live in *Maya*. Is there then no way out, no hope? That we are all miserable, that this world is really a prison, that even our so-called trailing beauty is but a prison-house, and that even our intellects and minds are prison-houses, have been known for ages upon ages. .....Is there no way out? We find that with all this, with this terrible fact before us, in the midst of sorrow and suffering, even in this world where life and death are synonymous, even here, there is a still voice that is ringing through all ages, through every country, and in every heart: "This My *Maya* is divine, made up of qualities, and very difficult to cross. Yet those that come unto Me cross the river of life." "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This is the voice that is leading us forward. Man has heard it, and is hearing it all through the ages.[8]

So according to Vivekananda, *Maya* is a concept symbolising the fact of the world with good and evil in it. Both these are necessary for the world. However much we try, we cannot get away from involvement in them. But there is a way out, and that is trust in the Lord.

(*b*) At the same time, the Ramakrishna Movement has in the Mission an instrument to carry out a programme of service. The main type of permanent work done by the Movement in 1956 is appended in the *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission* by Swami Gambhirananda, which we may reproduce here.

1. *Medical Service.*—12 indoor Hospitals with 19,523 patients and 60 outdoor Dispensaries with 2,574,539 cases, including repeated ones.

2. *Educational Work.*—(*a*) 53 students' Homes with 2,668 boys and 311 girls. (*b*) 1 general first-grade College with 1,565 boys, and another residential intermediate College with 209 boys. (*c*) 2 Teachers' Training Colleges with 118 trainees. (*d*) 3 Engi-

[7] *Complete Works*, **2**, p. 97.

[8] *Ibid.*, **2**, pp. 122–23.

neering Schools with 445 boys. (*e*) A budding Agricultural School. (*f*) 35 High Schools with 10,845 boys and 4,344 girls; and 127 Lower-grade Schools with 13,644 boys and 9,369 girls. (*g*) One institute for training auxiliary nurses and midwives—number 80.

3. *Temporal Relief Work.*[9]—If the Ramakrishna Movement is interested only in proclaiming the message of religious synthesis, why are these activities being undertaken by it? The leaders of the Movement make it clear that its ideal is not to work for the creation of a better world. It believes that a better world cannot be created at all. At the same time, the Movement would maintain that men and women ought to be helped to realise their true nature. Man's real nature lies beyond the world. He is Brahman. The realisation of this truth alone will be of ultimate value for man.

When the emphasis of the veritable Divinity of man is taken seriously, we shall see that the poor man lying naked and hungry on the wayside is as much God as every one of us is. In trying to alleviate his misery, we are helping ourselves, for it is the God in us that is the God in him also. This emphasis affords a better ground for service than any other theory.

In conclusion we may note briefly the three affirmations of the Ramakrishna Movement, which we have tried so far to bring out.

1. The Movement believes that it has a faith which is for all nations, and that it must be preached all over the world.

2. That faith consists in a deep conviction that all forms of religion are valid, but that in Advaitism all of them are comprehended and transcended. In relation to Christianity in particular, the Movement claims to give a very significant place to Jesus Christ and even to raise him from the limited confessions of the Christian Church to a realm of universality.

3. The movement maintains that its insistence on the common Divinity of man everywhere provides a basis for social service superior to any other emphasis.

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[9] Gambhirananda, *op. cit.*, pp. 435–36.

HINDUISM AND ITS ATTITUDE TO CHRISTIANITY

By Prof. P. Sankaranarayanan

There are some fundamental facts about Hinduism which must be clearly grasped. In the first place, the name "Hinduism" itself is a misnomer. It is more properly called the "Vedic religion" or "Sanātana Dharma". Unlike other religions, which are named after their founders, the religion of Hindus is named after its scripture, namely, the Vedas. Hinduism is not a founded religion and its scripture is believed to have no human authorship. Anterior to the scriptures of all other religions, the Vedas are declarations of eternal truths. Truth exists by itself and in its own right independent of human utterance. There is no temporal beginning for Truth. Nor does Truth ever cease to be. Being embodiments of Truth, the Vedas have no beginning and can have no end in time. Hence, they are called *anādi* (without beginning) and *ananta* (without end). From this point of view, the Vedic religion is eternal, *sanātana*.

This invests Hinduism with an impersonal character which is the source of its greatest strength. It avoids the danger of loyalty to a person taking the place of loyalty to the truths that he teaches. Personal allegiances promote divisions among men and militate against universality. We are all one in our devotion to impersonal Truth; but we walk into different camps when we label ourselves by the prophets who spoke those truths. Hinduism has no prophet as other religions have. Its sages and saints are only examples of the Vedic Way and of the Vedantic Vision. They verified the eternal verities in their lives and vindicated their validity. Not one of the succession of great teachers of the Hindu faith ever claimed to promulgate a new religion of his own. But every one of them traced his teachings to the primordial source of the Vedas.

The Tenets of Hinduism

According to Hinduism, men are divided into two groups, the *āstikās* and the *nāstikās*. The *āstikās* affirm certain things which are fundamental to Hinduism while the *nāstikās* deny them. Those who say "it is" (*asti*) are *āstikās*; those who say

"it is not" (*nāsti*) are *nāstikās*. The *āstikās* affirm that five things exist and are true: (1) the Vedas; (2) God; (3) the *ātman* or the innermost lustrous part of each living being; (4) a future life (as there have been lives in the past); and (5) the operation of the principle of *Karma*. The *nāstikās* deny either all five of these, or some of them. Every Hindu believes in them all, and orders his life in accord with that belief.

Like the Vedas, God, according to the Hindus, is universal in form and character. It is wrong to say that Hindus are polytheists. Before anyone spoke the language of monism or of monotheism, the Vedas declared: that which exists is one, the wise speak of it variously. The Hindus believe that the One God, with whom no name or form can be associated, can be conceived in any form and can be called by any name. He can be comprehended and worshipped in various ways according to individual capacities and predilections. When Hindus worship different deities, they are aware that they are all manifestations of One God. That is why they retain to this day their corporate character as Hindus, despite the prolixity of denominational groups devoted to different manifestations of the Supreme. That is also why, as we shall see below, it is possible for the Hindus to adopt a fraternal attitude to followers of other religions as fellow pilgrims in the same spiritual quest.

The Transcendence of Finitude

Religion connotes a process of re-union: *re*, again, and *ligare* to bind. It relates to the endeavour to bind again what has been sundered. The entire cosmos, made up of all that is living and lifeless, is the one vast Infinite. Due to a cause which it is neither possible nor necessary to go into, man has separated himself from that Infinite Whole and conceives himself as finite by that separation. Religion is the expression of the endeavour of the finite to restore itself to the Infinite. In essence, man is the Infinite. The Infinite which, by definition, is unlimited, is universal and comprehends everything in its being. Anything apart from it and outside it will detract from its Infiniteness. Man wrongly thinks that he is not of the Infinite. The office of religion is to restore to man this consciousness of his own Infinitude. Finitude, real or fancied, makes for the woes of life. Transcendence of finitude is synonymous with liberation

from bondage. Hinduism prescribes the ways of effecting this transcendence by the triple paths of knowledge, devotion and dedicated work. The last of these cleanses the mind and directs it to God. Devotion involves God's grace by which the devotee obtains the enlightenment about his true nature which brings about that transcendence.

The Law of *Karma*

Hinduism realizes that this transcendence cannot be effected, for the generality of men, at once within the span of this life. The impediments to it in the form of mental propensities are great, and they have been accumulated through a number of lives in the past. This belief in a series of lives previous to the present, and in the operation of the law of *Karma* which is the psychical version of the physical law of causation, is cardinal to Hinduism. "Our deeds follow us from afar and what we have been makes us what we are." No other principle can explain the inequalities in the fortunes of men and solve the problem of "unmerited" (?) suffering. To attribute the responsibility to God would be to associate partiality or ignorance with him. The present life vouchsafed to us is to be utilized to wipe out completely or in part, according to our capacities and endeavours, the residual effects of previous actions making for present bondage, and to give a carry-over value to the merit that we acquire in the present life.

It is necessary in this context to remove the impression that the doctrine of *Karma* involves a fatalistic view of life and takes away from the concept of human freedom. While, in a sense, *Karma* is inexorable in its operation, it can be annulled upon the dawn of knowledge or by the flow of Divine Grace. It is possible for man to acquire this knowledge and grace by a way of life in which the binding effects of *Karma* are negated by sublimating it to a higher purpose and without attachment to its fruits. The present is no doubt determined by our past, but we can determine our future. This consciousness that whatever we do, of good or evil, will come back to us, discovering us through any number of births, is the most potent determinant of a moral life.

Progress Towards Infinitude

It is thought that Hinduism is pessimistic in its outlook on life, as it speaks of the sorrows of *samsara* and the way of escape from them. This charge applies equally to all religions which hold out a heaven to which every man is told to aspire. The Hindu view of the state of liberation is that it is one of complete bliss without the possibility of coming back to an embodied existence. The finitized *ātman* throws off its blinkers, realizes its true nature as the Infinite, and is no more afflicted by the limitations of its erstwhile finitude. Hinduism is optimistic enough to assure every man that this state of unalloyed and eternal bliss is within his reach, will he but strive for it in ways prescribed by scripture and perfected in the lives of sages and saints. At the same time, it affirms that this world is the vale of soul-making, and that this life is the opportunity which is to be utilized for securing his own perfection and for promoting the public weal. The spiritual progress of a person is measured in terms of his universal outlook and his capacity to look on all men as himself. The more a man approximates to the consciousness of his Infinitude, the more universal will be his outlook. The perfect sage who has attained liberation even in the present life, the *Jivanmukta* as he is called, is no more confined to his ego sense: he is in tune with the whole world. Autonomous as he is, being a law unto himself, he performs acts of public good from an inner compulsion which is the truest freedom. Morality, which is a normative ideal for other persons, becomes a normal activity to him, and his life becomes the pattern of goodness as it is the embodiment of holiness. He loves his neighbour as himself for the very excellent reason that, in the ultimate analysis, his neighbour is truly himself though, due to superficial trappings of finitude, he may appear to be different. Having " the knowledge of God," he is always " awake to righteousness and sins not". He " loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind," for he sees God in all things and all things in God. To him love of God is synonymous with love of fellowmen.

Religion is One

The attitude of the Hindu to Christianity is based on the view of universal religion. This is not to be understood as *one*

religion for all of humanity, for this is not possible even if it were necessary, and it is not necessary even if it were possible. Men of the world are diversely constituted by reason of their racial differences. The Hindu appreciates that all religions are methods of attaining spiritual perfection; he may not agree with their underlying philosophy or theology, but he does not quarrel so long as they are satisfactory to their respective followers. He realizes that, during the centuries of its existence, every religion has given birth to sages and saints, men who have " walked with God," great mystics who have had soul-sight of the Supreme. The rituals of various religions may differ, but their hymnology has a common import. The substance of prayer is the same in all religions. Priests may confine the adherents of different faiths in exclusive camps, but the mystics of all religions, speaking the same language as their experiences are identical, bring them together. Sri Ramakrishna, the saint of Dakshinesvar, verified every religion by his own personal achievement and proved that each is a different path to the same goal.

Religion is one though religions are many. And they must be many to provide for congenital differences in men. There are bound to be differences in approach, but the final attainment is the same. This view is fundamental to Hinduism. That is why within Hinduism itself there can be and actually are various schools and sects. By the same token, the Hindu has great respect for Christianity, as he has for Islam or any other religion, so long as each is confined to its sphere and does not make inroads into a sphere which does not belong to it. The fact that every religion extant in the world flourishes in India without let or hindrance is proof of this universality of Hinduism and of the hospitality of the Hindu. The Hindu appreciates that each religion is adequate for its followers, and does not countenance any person giving up the religion in which he is born.

The Hindu View of Conversion

The Hindu has great respect for Christ and his teachings. He sees in Christ, not the *son* of God, but God himself, for Sri Krishna told him in the *Gita* that whatever has spiritual superexcellence is part of himself. Christ is in the line of such superexcellent manifestations of God. But saying this does not mean that the Hindu is prepared to change his faith for that of the

Christian or would countenance attempts to make him do so. On the premise of universality as defined above, he does not see any need to change his religion for that of another, and, what is more, he feels that such a change would be against the spiritual grain imbedded in him through many lives.

The Hindu is unable to understand the Christian who claims absolute superiority for his religion and who, at the worst and in disregard of social decencies, derides and ridicules the Hindu religion, its tenets, and its practices. And when, as a missionary, the Christian proceeds to induce—and, not infrequently, to seduce —Hindus to become converts to Christianity, he feels irritated. He has no objection to the Christian explaining the tenets of his religion to those who ask to be instructed in them. But he does not agree to the message of the Church being substituted for the message of Christ. Commercial ethics prohibit the decrial of similar products of a rival firm, while they do not forbid trumpeting one's own products. The Hindu cannot understand why a different code should be observed in the realm of religion.

The Hindu is, however, sincerely appreciative of the many acts of humanitarian service that Christians have done and are doing in the fields of medical relief and education. But he would be happier still if he had no cause to feel that the motive behind these acts of public benefit is not solely humanitarian, but that they are prompted by the desire to extend the sway of the Christian Church. The Hindus have many friends among Christians whom they love and revere. They like the Christian, but not the converting missionary. The Hindus do not object, for they cannot, to one of their number becoming a Christian of his own accord, though they do regret that he does so, for one who does not have it in him to be a good Hindu cannot do better as a Christian. This is equally true of a Christian wishing to change his religion for any other. But they cannot bring themselves to believe the assertion of the missionary when he says: "I carry Christianity to the Hindu; he appreciates it and wants to be converted; then the Church steps in and embraces him." The way Christianity is *carried* to the Hindu is itself a matter for dispute, for the Hindu wonders why Christianity should be *thus* carried to others, and why every man should not be left in undisturbed allegiance to his own faith. That Christ is the only true incarnation, that his

Gospel is the only truth, that every man is a sinner who should be saved by the Church, that every Christian has a pious duty to preach the Gospel to others: these are statements to which the Hindu cannot subscribe and remain consistent with his own faith and the universality that it connotes.

Many Paths to the Hilltop

After all, the God of all religions must be the same. Otherwise, he would not be God and they would not be religions. The claim of the several religions to be able to effect the reunion of man with God has been proved in the persons of the great saints in them, all of whom have had an identical experience of that reunion. There can be many paths to the hilltop. Upon reaching the hilltop, upon the realization of the Universal that is God, the particulars of the different faiths vanish into their fulfilment. Once on the hilltop, every pilgrim sheds his credal vestures and the noise of the texts and the voice of the preacher are hushed in the transforming silence of the common communion with that inclusive unity which is the God of all religions. Why then should we engage ourselves in mutual dispute and waste our energies over the way that we should tread to reach the hilltop: this is the question which every Hindu earnestly puts to his Christian brother.

THE VIEW-POINT OF A HINDU THEIST

By Prof. C. T. K. Chari

Christian inquirers are apt to be told that the Hindu religion, which has no founders, enjoys a range, universality and catholicity which Christianity, because of its more uncompromising and proselytizing attitude, has seldom been able to command. Romain Rolland wrote to Rabindranath Tagore: "I have often wondered at the spirit of religious toleration in India, unlike anything we have in the West. The cosmic nature of your religion and the composite character of your civilization makes this possible. India has allowed all kinds of religious faith and practice to flourish side by side." Many enlightened Hindus hold that all faiths lead to God; all religions have a measure of truth. This was the burden of Swami Vivekananda's celebrated address before the Parliament of Religions.

The Case for Tolerance overstated

I am afraid that the case for tolerance and universality has been overstated. It is true that, even if we disregard heterodox Jainism and Buddhism and confine ourselves to the orthodox religio-philosophical systems of India (*āstika darshanas*), we find a very wide range of theological and metaphysical speculation and practices. But this, in my opinion, signifies little more than that the texts (the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Vedanta Sutra*) on which orthodox Hinduism rests are extremely cryptic on certain crucial issues and admit of conflicting interpretations. Thus the Great Saying (*mahā vākya*) of the *Upanishads*, "That Thou art" (*tat tvam asi*), has been interpreted from three divergent angles: by Sankara who elaborates the doctrine of the illusoriness of the world (*māyā vāda*), and the non-difference of the soul (*Atman*) and the Godhead (*Brahman*); by Ramanuja who expounds the theory that God, soul and the world are intimately related yet distinct from one another; and by Madhva who sets forth a radical pluralism and theism. All the three teachers (*acharyas*) are venerated; but it is obviously impossible to force their teaching into the same Procrustean bed. It is difficult for the Hindu scholar who is aware of these incompatible

interpretations to agree with Dr. Will Durant's observation in *Our Oriental Heritage* that the *Upanishads* propound these cardinal truths: the reality of the *Brahman*; the reality of the *Atman*; and the complete identity of the two. The Saiva Siddhānta religio-philosophy, which sways thousands of devotees in South India, has for one of its fundamental postulates the distinctness of the soul (*pasu*) and the Lord (*Pati* or God). Sankara's doctrine of non-duality (*advaita*) and illusoriness (*māyā vāda*) is by no means the essence of Hindu faith. One seeks in vain to extract a theory of non-difference from the memorable passage in the *Gita* (IX, 26): "But a single leaf, flower, fruit or drop of water (*patram pushpam phalam toyam*) offered to Me mightily pleaseth Me if offered by a loving soul wholly devoted to Me (*yo me bhaktyā prayachchhati, tad aham bhakty-upahritam*)". Even the "God is All (*vāsudevah sarvam iti*)" of the *Gita* (VII, 19) would seem to suggest a Panentheism rather than sheer Theopantism or Pantheism. Leaving our distinguished Indian philosophers like Radhakrishnan who espouse a sort of perspectivism admitting different levels of experience, personal values and a personal God being valid enough at a certain level but transcended at the ultimate non-dual level, popular Hinduism achieves a syncretism only at the cost of philosophic consistency and religious certitude. A religion in which one is not sure whether a Personal God is ultimate or not meanders into obscurity. The *acharyas* were both more outspoken and more uncompromising than their followers. Bernard Shaw makes the shrewd observation about popular Hinduism: "The apparent multiplicity of gods is bewildering at first glance, but one soon discovers that they are all the same God in different aspects and functions. There is always one uttermost God who defies personification. This makes Hinduism the most tolerant religion in the world. Christ is there as Krishna who might also be Dionysius." But a Christ who might be Krishna and Dionysius as well makes the serious Christian and the serious Hindu alike uneasy and a faith in which the "profoundest Methodist and the crudest idolater" are bedfellows is a little too accommodating. I suggest that the issue is not simply one of Christianity and Hinduism *vis-a-vis*; the basic difference in theory and practice within Hinduism itself require to be scrutinized without any premature acceptance of the view that worship of a Personal God necessarily leads beyond Him to the Impersonal Godhead.

The Doctrine of *Karma* Re-examined

Popular expositions of Hindu religion delight in saying that the subtle doctrine of *karma* enables us to interpret the moral government of the world in a fashion wholly acceptable to science. *Karma* is the universal law of cause and effect. What we sow, we reap. And if we sow wind, we reap whirlwind. For one trained in modern philosophy of science, however, there are many thorny questions to be met before the doctrine can be regarded as unassailable and universal. Does effect follow cause in the moral as in the physical domain? Scruples about causality have been raised in quantum physics and, in the psycho-biological sciences, the status of causality is not unambiguous. Modern thinkers like Bergson regard all extensions of the principle of causality to the moral and spiritual domain as gratuitous. Is *karma* cosmic retributive justice? Many texts seem to imply just that. But can a retributive theory of punishment, albeit cast in an impersonal and cosmic mould, satisfy the requirements of modern ethical theory? To be sure, on a certain interpretation of the Christian Doctrine of Atonement, God's retributive Justice outweighs even his Love. Nonetheless, it is a question whether the overwhelming impression of love and forgiveness in the New Testament altogether favours that view any more than the marvellous verse in the *Gita* (XVIII. 66): "Surrender all duties and rules; seek Me alone as your Refuge (*Sarva-dharman parityajya Mam ekam saranam vraja*)". Be that as it may, Hindu thinkers have to make up their minds on the question of the precise construction to be put on the *karma* theory before commending it to others. Radhakrishnan, with his foresight, rejects the retributive interpretation of *karma* and explains away the relevant texts as allegories. According to him, *karma* is the principle of moral continuity if not a principle of moral causation. Goodness leads to more opportunities for the Good; and badness results in freedom to do evil. Unfortunately, even this ingenious interpretation does not settle all issues. Does a principle of moral continuity, as Radhakrishnan understands it, entail the hypothesis of rebirth? The issue deserves to be pondered.

The Dialectic of Hindu Mysticism

Am I saying that the Christian has nothing to gain by a sympathetic reconsideration of the sources of Hindu religion?

Far from that. In my articles which have appeared in *Philosophy East and West*, the *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* and elsewhere, I have urged that the dialectic of Hindu mysticism deserves to be reconsidered in a much wider context than that provided by Indian philosophy. Even if God is Supremely Personal, the relation of Creator to creature cannot be fathomed by our logical categories. *Credo quia absurdum* is no heresy. It is important that, in our comparative studies of mysticism, we should go back to medieval Christian mysticism and seek to understand what Eckhart, for instance, did with the Athanasian creed, " Neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the substance." Each Person in the Trinity gives His whole substance to the others and receives it wholly. God gives Himself to the soul beyond all categories. Eckhart had no hesitation in affirming the transcendence of God; and he needed no elaborate demonstration of the spirit which dwells in the inner " little castle " (*burgelin*) of the soul, the ground (*der Grunt*), " the spirit of the soul " (*der sele geist*), " the spark of the soul " (*das Funkelein der sele*), reminding us of the *scintilla* of Plotinus and the *scintilla animæ* of Aquinas, Peter Lombard and St. Jerome. W. R. Matthews, in his *Problem of Christ in the Twentieth Century*, has remarked that any modern Christology has to reckon with Man the " Great Amphibian " inhabiting two worlds, the changing and the changeless, a pointer to the Greek *nous*, the Indian *Atman* and the German *Grund*. Vladimir Solovyov's great dream of the " deification of all mankind " was not the climax of Hegelian dialectic but a return to the mystical vision of St. Sergius of Radonezh (1314–92) who perhaps gave Russian Christian theology its *sobornost* in its most characteristic form: the contemplation of the Divine tri-unity which enables us to overcome all hateful divisions of the world. A South Indian saint testifies: " I have seen " (*nan kandu-k-konden*).

Is a world-faith possible? The earnest Christian and the earnest Hindu are equally interested in the question. Hegel set the fashion of reducing various faiths to " moments " in a preconceived dialectic. One is not too happy about such ventures. W. E. Hocking, in his Hibbert Lectures, *Living Religions and World Faith*, examined three possible ways to a world-faith. One the road of " radical displacement " (favoured, according to Hocking, by Barth and Kraemer), each faith hardens its outlines to exclude what it regard as alien faiths. The way of " syn thesis '

permits a faith to accommodate the contents of another faith with some distortion of its shape; it has been followed by enthusiasts whose zeal sometimes outruns their discretion. Hocking dwelt on the implications of the way of " Inclusion by Reconception". One faith, without distortion of its shape, widens its base to include what it finds valid in another faith, and infinitely more, as its self-understanding deepens. A more genuine inter-religious understanding among scholars is necessary if " Inclusion by Reconception " is to be attempted at all. Dr. Will Durant has written: " Perhaps in return for conquest, arrogance and spoliation, India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of mature mind, the quiet content of the unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit, and a unifying, pacifying love for all living things". I suggest that we shall promote inter-religious understanding by learning the lesson of universal charity (*Ahimsa* and *Sarvodaya*) not only from the Hindu sources but from the Sayings of the Holy Father, Isaac the Syrian, Hermit and Ascetic: " And I was asked what is a pitying heart? And I answered: the glow in a man's heart for all creatures, for men, birds, for animals, demons and for creatures of all kinds. He prays with tears even for the dumb beasts, and for the enemies of truth and those who do him wrong, that God may preserve them and have mercy on them."

SOME ISSUES IN THE CHRISTIAN APPRAISAL OF RELIGIONS

By The Rev. John B. Carman

The Christian interpretation of religions is receiving renewed attention by Christian scholars. A number of the more recent works on this subject are reviewed in this number of the Bulletin. Here I should like to draw your attention to some of the significant issues raised in this contemporary discussion, with special reference to the works of Freytag, Farmer, and Niles which are discussed in the Book Review Section.

I. Comparing Religions

The "Essence of Religion"

The Nineteenth Century concept of the "essence of religion" has remained in the thinking of a number of contemporary writers whose approaches are otherwise quite divergent. Modern Hindu philosophies stress the common essence of religions beneath the varying forms. For Toynbee, this common essence is not an axiom, but it is worth the effort to separate "the kernel from the husk". Freytag, on the other hand, is quite willing to grant that there are many formal similarities between religions, but he believes that religions differ sharply in their *essential content*. Farmer uses what he calls a "normative concept" of the essence of religion, a structure which is present fully in Christian worship, but occurs in imperfect and distorted forms in the other religions.

However it is used, this concept of the "essence of religion" is, I submit, more misleading than helpful. If it is used to indicate the common ground of all religions, it is either the "essence" of one's own religion or a philosophical common denominator which does not correspond to any religion. If it is used to stress the differences between religions, it results in putting many significant aspects of religions in the category of "merely formal" similarities. We can better abandon this distinction between form and content and simply ask: are there significant similarities between religions, and if so, how are we to assess them in the light of the Christian faith?

Are Religions "Closed Systems"?

One answer to this question which enjoys wide support at present is to locate the common feature in different religions, not in the religious systems, but in the religious consciousness of man. The similar features in religions are, according to this view, traceable to that religious awareness and creativity which is shared by all men. Each religious system, however, is a closed unity whose parts gain their meaning from the whole. It is therefore illegitimate, it is argued, to compare concepts of different systems or to isolate "truths" from the religion as a whole. When this view was popularized by Kraemer and others twenty years ago, it was a needed corrective to the tendency to analyze religions in terms of isolated concepts, but this view can be pushed to an extreme that is neither historically correct nor theologically justifiable.

Religions *tend* to transform and unify the diverse elements in their structure, but they often only partially succeed. Certain elements of religion have such an outspoken character of their own that they may even influence the "whole" of a religion more than they are influenced by it. The role of mysticism in Islam is a striking example. The view of religions as closed systems often leads to this consequence: either the religion *as a whole* must be a positive response to God's Word of truth, or there can be *no evidence at all* in that religion that God has revealed Himself to that people. But are those really the alternatives? A comment by one of the minority who opposed this view at the Bossey Consultation last March is worth quoting. "One participant questioned whether religions actually are wholes and suggested that they attempt to become wholes but necessarily fail to do so. He held that the attainment of 'wholeness' by the religions is made impossible by God's activity within them."

Many who advocate this view do not maintain that *every* religious system is incomparable to every other, for they regularly class together a large number of "primitive religions" or "nature religions". What seems to be meant, therefore, is that one group of religious systems has such a radically different orientation from another group that it is quite meaningless to compare apparently similar concepts in the two kinds of systems. Sometimes it is "prophetic religions" which are thus contrasted with "nature

religions"; sometimes it is Christianity contrasted with all other religions.

But the same objections, I submit, can be urged against this refinement of the "closed system" view. There is an alternative view, developed by van der Leeuw and others, which I think deserves our serious consideration. This view maintains that there are many categories common to Christianity and other religions, whose meaning does indeed change from religion to religion, but not so radically as to deprive the categories of any common meaning. This is particularly true of certain ritual acts, such as prayer and sacrifice, but also of religious offices (prophet and priest) and religious concepts. In interpreting Christianity to others or even in understanding it ourselves, we inevitably use these categories which are "common coin" of the religious realm.

II. The Gospel, Christianity, Other Religions

A Polar Relation

Freytag is not happy with the idea that religions are utterly God-forsaken, but he does not question the notion of the polar relationship between the Gospel and all religions. The Bossey Consultation report speaks of the "distinction between Christianity as a religious system and the Gospel of God in Jesus Christ". This view is that the Gospel "judges all man's attempts to live by religion. Christianity as a religious system is as fully under the judgment of Christ and His Gospel as are the other religions". But should we thus identify "religious system" and "man's attempts to live by religion"? The Apostle Paul writes that "the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just and good", just after he has written, "For sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me" (Romans 7: 11–12). Here we see both the close connection and the sharp distinction which he makes between the "religious system" of the Old Covenant and man's effort to live by this system instead of by the grace of God. Just what parts of the Christian "religious system" are we able to set in "polar relation" to the Gospel? Would it be the Scriptures, Preaching, the Sacraments, the Ministry, the Congregation, or the wider organization of the Church? None of them, for the real polar relation here is between God's righteousness and our sin, a sin which may find opportunity in the most

holy Divine ordinance. We therefore, have no right so radically to oppose the Gospel of Christ to other religions, simply because they are "religious systems".

Is Christianity the Norm of True Religion?

Farmer presents the opposite thesis that the living essence of religion has its only perfect manifestation in the Christian revelation and religion. The concept of Christianity as "true religion" is accepted by most theologians and is even used, with a special meaning, by Barth in his radical contrasting of religion and faith. It is hard to see how this could be otherwise, since God's revelation in Christ contains a demand that men respond rightly to Him, and it is this right response which we can call the norm of true religion. Great difficulty arises, however, when we try to define this norm and to apply it.

Farmer attempts to take "the concept thus defined into the midst of historical reality", but the result of using his norm to decide what is truly religious and what is not is to exclude or misinterpret a large part of the historical reality of religion. It seems unlikely that others, even if they can formulate a more nearly adequate norm of "true religion", can understand other religions well enough to apply it fruitfully. Neither will this normative approach be helpful in Apologetics, for we inevitably take an *ideal* view of the Christian religious response and compare it with the actual religious responses in other religions. This will only serve to annoy, not to persuade. The quality of the Christian's religious response is convincing only as it actually occurs and can be seen by others.

What then is the value of this notion that elements which are elsewhere separated and distorted are unified in ideal expressions of Christianity? It is of no value for a general theistic world-view, for the adherents of each religion will feel the same way about the ideal expression of their own religion. It may, however, be of considerable value in the Christian's own understanding of God's plan to sum up all things in Christ. But the chief value of such a notion may be to serve as a salutary warning to Christians, lest the "distortion" of the Christian religious norm which we think we discern in another religion become the characteristic expression of their own religious life. The Christian's religious

response may become more characteristic of Judaism, Confucianism, or Hinduism than of the "new man in Christ".

III. The Christian Theological Approach

Theology and Philosophy

Farmer intends to present a "specifically *Christian* theological interpretation of religion", which he regards as forming one part of a total Christian theistic world-view. He is therefore identifying Theology with Christian theistic philosophy. He seeks to preserve the philosophical claim of his Christian theism by the provision that no Christian doctrine will be introduce and inauthoritarian way. He will treat each doctrine or category as a hypothesis, to be justified only to the extent to which it fits into a coherent world-view making sense of all human experience. This very provision, however, means that Farmer is writing philosophy, not theology. Theological doctrines must be proven consistent with the Gospel. The affirmations of the Christian Proclamation, however, are not hypothetical conclusions but the permanent starting point of Theology. Farmer's four assumptions also indicate that his work should be considered as Philosophy. The first assumption is the central Christian affirmation, expressed in the special terms of his Personalistic philosophy. The other three have a theological background, but as such they are philosophical assumptions, not postulates directly derived from basic tenets of the Christian faith.

Formulating the relation of philosophy to the Christian theological interpretation of religions is one of the tasks which we must take up much more seriously in the years ahead. Protestants have been too inclined either to identify "Christian theism" with Dogmatics, or to dismiss philosophy as irrelevant to the theology. We have much to learn from the Roman Catholic approaches to this problem. The great structure of the combined philosophy-theology of Hinduism confronts all Christians here in India. Is it too much to suggest that at this one point, at least, *all* Christians need to begin to *think together* about it?

Religious Experience

Farmer's norm of religious experience is inadequate for Theology and of doubtful value even for a Christian philosophy

of religion. *All religious experience points to a norm beyond itself*, so that while it is *the medium of religious knowledge*, it is never itself the ultimate norm. It seems to me that the elements which Farmer claims to find in Christian worship by "productive empathy" are simply abstractions from the Christian faith which underlies the worship of the Church. Because of his exclusive emphasis on the personal relation, the affirmations of the faith are flattened out into a two-dimensional vertical plane between God and the individual. There is no dimension to express the great saving acts of God for men, no dimension to express the fullness of Christ.

There is a place where Farmer should have exercised "productive empathy", and that is in the study of other religions. But he is not interested in "a descriptive or phenomenological account of religion". Without a real effort to understand what other religions take to be "religious", he decides what is and what is not religious on the basis of his own Personalist definition. The result is a failure to understand "primitive religion" and a classification of dominant emphases which places Taoism and Islam in the same rubric.

The source of our knowledge of our own faith is Revelation. The source of our knowledge of other religions is the religious experience of their adherents, which they also believe to be the medium of Revelation. Since, however, what they see as Revelation does not appear so to us, we must try to enter into their religious experience in order to understand what they believe about its trans-human source. In this difficult task of imaginative understanding or "empathy", we necessarily draw upon our own religious experience to find some clue as to what stirs their hearts and directs their minds. Within the sphere of phenomenology, Christian categories should serve, not as a measuring rod of judgment, but as a bridge of understanding.

The Bible and Christian Dogmatics

Freytag's important contribution is his discussion of the Biblical concept of the Gentiles and its implications for our understanding of religion. This is the concept in the Bible which comes nearest to our modern notion of alien religions. We are also interested, however, in what light the Bible sheds on *all* religions *including our own*. We should therefore also study the Biblical concepts of the Chosen People and the Law.

Biblical studies of the last decades have cut through many of the false alternatives posed by theologies which had become sadly detached from their Biblical foundations. However, Biblical word studies are no substitute for historical and systematic theology. Freytag's approach is certainly preferable to certain recent efforts to deduce an entire "theology of religion" from the Lutheran doctrine of Justification by Faith. But even for our subject, what the Bible contains on topics related to "religion" is less important than all that it reveals about God's dealings with man.

Niles has achieved a better combination of the Biblical and systematic elements. His approach is not confined to a study of words or even topics, but it focusses on the central message of the Bible. Farmer is concerned with *religious experience evoked by God*, Freytag with *man in his religion as he is judged and redeemed by God*, but Niles is centrally concerned with *the activity of God as it is revealed and fulfilled in the work of Jesus Christ.*

IV. Why Do Christians Differ?

Niles tries to explain why Christians differ so widely in their understanding of the relation of Christianity to other religions. The center of God's activity in the Incarnation and in the Church's proclamation of the Gospel is quite definite and distinct, and demands of all men the same response. But God's universal redemptive activity among men, and His working to bring all Creation to fulfilment in Christ, are manysided; they will necessarily be seen by different Christians in different ways. This is a useful suggestion as to why we *do* differ, but it does not prove that we *must* differ so radically. Perhaps if we were more agreed concerning the center of God's activity in Christ, we could help one another to follow the light from the center out to the edge of the circle, to the half shadows of His dealings with the nations.

There is another reason for our differences and our confusion about this whole subject, Niles contends. Our approach has been determined by what happens in the Christian's mind when he studies other religions, rather than by what happens when the Gospel is proclaimed. Niles is right in pointing to this danger in our study, but it seems to me that the thinking of the Christian studying other religions *can* have the same objective reference

as that of Christian preaching: God's redemptive activity among the nations.

Here we run up against what seems to be a contradiction or confusion in Niles' thought, but one so basic to his presentation that it must be deliberate. He defines the relation which the whole discussion is about as "the operation of the gospel" among both Christians and non-Christians, and he says that the question we must ask is, "What happens when the gospel is proclaimed?" But he answers this question by outlining the entire redemptive activity of God from Creation to the final Consummation!

This apparent contradiction is strikingly similar to the Christocentric emphasis of Karl Barth, who is so anxious to relate every act of God in Creation and Redemption to Jesus Christ that he tends to identify the knowledge of God which the Gospel declares is already given to men, with the Gospel proclamation itself. He can do this because he understands the event of God's revelation in Christ as something in which the fact and the knowledge of the fact are so closely combined that they cannot be separated even in thought. Although Barth's Christocentric intent is laudable, I submit that this notion of a single Divine event spanning all time, but actual only at the moment when it is made known, leads to confusion in theology and a forced exegesis of the Scriptures. When Niles says that it is Jesus himself who establishes the relation between Christianity and other religions, this is certainly right, if he means the entire activity of the Son of God and Risen Incarnate Lord. The proclamation of Jesus, however, is an event which Niles himself says determines only one aspect, even if a crucial aspect, of the whole relation of God to man.

V. How Much Can We Say?

"It is not necessary for us to define or describe the ways in which God's busyness with man has been exercised, it is enough to know that that busyness has been there." This is Niles' solution to a vexing problem, but I do not think it is a solution with which we can long be satisfied. We are quite prone to describe the No to God in other religions; we ought to give equally careful attention to the *details* or *specific elements* of the Yes to God in religions. This is not primarily in order to be "fair" to other religions but in order to grasp fully the meaning of

the Christian message. The Christian message contains a radical critique of religion, but it is set in a religious context. The Bible is not a book *about religion*, but it is filled with *religious categories*. The Gospel can, it is true, be translated for a secular world into non-religious terms, but "religionless Christianity" remains a difficult and not altogether successful "translation".

Though his program of "demythologizing" New Testament theology Rudolf Bultmann is setting forth a "religionless Christianity" for modern man. He tries to remove all religious concepts which the Gospel in any way shares with other religions. The result is that the Gospel is reduced to silence, or at least, to a wordless encounter between God and the individual in his particular existential situation. There is the bare event of Christ, without any words to convey its meaning to us.

Contrary to Bultmann's view, we should affirm that God has given us the *words* to understand the *Word*. The entire meaning of the Gospel is given in human words, words transformed by the events they describe and interpret, but their original meaning remains significant for their meaning in Christian faith. Jesus, the *Anointed King* of the *Chosen People*, became *the Lamb slain for sinners*. He conquered the *Realm of the Dead* and *Arose in glory*. He *ascended* to the *Right Hand of God*. In the *Last Days* He will return to earth from *Heaven* as the *Righteous Judge* to establish the *Kingdom of God*.—This is the *Gospel of God*, but the words are those of *Men's Religions*.

"Man uses God as power against God." This important idea of Freytag's was much discussed at the Bossey Consultation. From the standpoint of what man is doing, the important words are "against God". But what does it mean from God's standpoint that He allows His gifts to men, and even the supreme gift of Himself, to be so used? Is this a mystery into which we may not gaze, or may we catch some inkling of this mystery also, in the light of Christ? We are at least obligated to acknowledge this mystery, and when we speak of man's sin in trying to live by his religion, we should remember this mysterious background of God's Providence, His Patience and His Wrath, and His Preparation of the Nations for Redemption through His Chosen One. Something in religion is God-given, and not simply man-made, and it is this that constitutes the enormity of Man's sin in his religion.

It is in this same light that we should see Christ as the "stumbling block". Niles does not point out how daring is his exegesis of I Corinthians 1:23. The Apostle Paul writes that our preaching of Christ crucified is "a stumbling block (*skandalon*) to Jews and folly to Gentiles," but Niles maintains that for the followers of these great non-Christian religions (who are the Gentiles), the Gospel is not only foolish, but also "scandalous". I believe that Niles is quite right in this daring exegesis, but if so, it must be because the stumbling block is the same for other non-Christians as it is for Jews: the Christian message is offensive to the most sacred truth which they know. Let me put this in the sharpest possible terms: whatever may cause men to misunderstand Christ or to ridicule Him, it is something in their religion which is *from God* which causes them to be *offended* with Him. It is therefore likely to be something in another religion which we admire and appreciate the most which causes men to stumble. Here, surely, is one paradoxical sign of "God's busyness" among all peoples, a sign which we not only can recognize but can understand with some anguish of heart. For we, too, know what it is to be offended, and to stumble before Christ. God's gifts to our fathers have often made us proud of our own righteousness and blinded us to His Greatest Gift to us all.

VI. The Relevance of This Question

Christian Theology should be *determined*, not by the particular situation in which Christians find themselves, but by the Gospel of God in Christ. Yet it takes a *particular situation* to *stimulate* the Church to reflect afresh on the content of its message. The encounter with the world's religions may present Christian theology with such a challenge. The encounter between religions is intensifying in all parts of the world, but even if that were not so, the whole Church ought to be involved in the mission to the whole world. Even more important, however, is that the question we are considering raises the fundamental issues of the Christian faith. A theology which bypasses it is not only lacking one chapter; it may be radically defective as a whole.

It is necessary for Christians to be *thinking* about the Christian evaluation of other religions when they proclaim the Gospel or when they enter into conversation with non-Christians (of any of the kinds mentioned in the *Report of Commission II*). But

it is not necessary that they be *agreed* on the various issues, noted above, and it would be quite wrong to use this necessary theological discussion among Christians as an excuse for postponing conversation with non-Christians. There is one important point, however, on which we should already agree.

Niles asks whether Gandhiji was wrong in saying, "I think of Christ as belonging to the whole world". "No," Niles answers, "except that Christ belongs to the whole world not as its possession but as its possessor". But in this sense we may say that "we do not take the gospel to someone to whom Jesus does not already belong", since Jesus Christ has already died for him. Remembering this "will save us from treating those who have not yet confessed Jesus to be their personal Saviour as people who are outside Jesus. In our evangelistic work we are not seeking to make people become what they are not already. We are seeking simply to tell them what and who they are". Christ is theirs, because they are already His.

REFLECTIONS ON THE NAGPUR SEMINAR

By The Rt. Rev. Sabapathy Kulandran

Twenty years ago, when the Commission on "the Attitude to non-Christian Religions" at the International Missionary Conference at Tambaram was drawing up its report, and we wanted to make a comment on some topic or other, a missionary lady got up in great alarm and said "We cannot do this. This must be done by experts". I think the Conference that met at Nagpur in October 1958 would have safely qualified in the eyes of that lady. The only difference between the qualifications of experts twenty years ago and now is that then there was a general belief that experts on any subject were Western; whereas now there is a recognition that Easterners have also entered this circle. If an expert is a person who has given careful, intelligent and prolonged attention to a subject, then it must be confessed that in those days our quota of production in the matter was not very high, as far as most branches of knowledge were concerned.

The most important point about the Conference organised by the Institute for the Study of Religion and Society was that it was held at all. That is, here was a body of Christian scholars, largely Indian, competent according to all reasonable standards to speak about non-Christian religions and the issues that arise when Christianity faces them, who had come to give their opinion on the chief problems in the field. There has always been a suspicion that Indians are not willing to put in the patient, prolonged and intensive study that entitles one to speak with authority on any subject; and it must be admitted that we were for long content to be amateurs, with the freedom allowed to amateurs of giving facile opinions on any kind of subject. It has taken us long to realise that behind the right to deliver judgments worthy of attention, in regard to difficult or important subjects, there must be hard, patient, intensive study.

A Good Beginning

It was significant of our growing sense of responsibility that quite a number of those who gathered at Nagpur had Ph.D.

degrees in the field of non-Christian Religions. Of those who did not possess the hall-mark of a doctorate, there were quite a few who had spent years in the study of the subject. The fact that about twenty-five Indians who could talk intelligently on the subject of non-Christian religions could meet together at a Conference does not certainly mean that the Indian Church has come of age theologically. India is a vast country; and the subject of non-Christian religions is vast and many-sided. Each aspect requires perhaps a life-time of study. The important thing about the Conference was not that it showed that there was adequate talent for the immense task ahead, but that it showed that there was adequate talent to make a beginning.

About our making a beginning just now, it may be said quite emphatically that it is just as well that we are in a position to do so, because on the one hand there has been a great renaissance of non-Christian religions, while on the other hand there has been a serious decline of interest in the problems posed by the confrontation of Christian with non-Christian religions in the very circles, which were at one time considered competent to pronounce opinion in these matters. The attainment of political independence by many countries of South-East Asia has removed the vested interest that the West had in the East; and a similar transfer of authority to nationals in missionary circles has virtually led to a withdrawal of Western missionary interest from the intellectual responsibilities of the Church *vis a vis* non-Christian Religions; if it has not actually led to a heavy withdrawal of Western personnel from the missionary task.

This withdrawal from the intellectual responsibilities of the Church in this matter is noticeable not merely locally, but even at ecumenical levels. The interest displayed in this matter at ecumenical gatherings in the West does not greatly impress a participant who may go from this hemisphere. Compared with the attitude of those who came to Tambaram twenty years ago from the West the difference is painful to notice. The present writer was rash enough recently to write on this subject to the Secretary of the World Council of Churches and discovered that he had unwittingly trod on controversial ground, in dispute between the World Council and the International Missionary Council, which every well-behaved person was expected to avoid. It

is, therefore, clear beyond doubt that the time has come for the Indian Church to realise its responsibility in the matter. The Conference in Nagpur is an indication that this is being done.

One of the ways in which we can discharge our responsibility better is by submitting ourselves always to a rigorous process of self-examination. The Conference in October was our first meeting. Useful as it was, its usefulness will be greatly increased if we are willing to take it up for review and learn from the lessons it may teach us. Therefore whatever may be said here must be taken as being said in an effort to improve our effectiveness in discharging the responsibility we have undertaken.

The first point which I would like to make, and it is a point which will be granted immediately, is that we do our thinking in a conference of this sort on behalf of the Christian Church. While we must know all about non-Christian religions and must even try to be experts in them, we know them and are experts in them as Christians. Progress of thought is from a presupposition to a conclusion. If we start from nothing, we arrive at nothing (unless it be Jean Paul Sartre's Existentialism, which of course amounts to the same thing). "If you come down to breakfast every morning, feeling that every question is an open question", you do not in the end become very much wiser. But because we are committed to particular presuppositions, it most certainly does not mean that we are also committed to particular conclusions. Does commitment to presuppositions imply commitment to obscurantism and bigotry? Most certainly not. A person committed to obscurantism is a person who refuses to move as far as a conclusion, and who always wants to stand where he is. A universal skeptic cannot and an obscurantist will not go forward from where they are.

Theological Standing Ground

Where does the Christian thinker take his stand when he starts thinking theologically? In former days one used to talk about two kinds of theology: systematic theology and Biblical theology. The distinction between the two no longer has much validity. Every Christian theological position is now expected to have a sound Biblical backing. It is not that in the old days the two branches were independent of each other; but that

in those days people were willing to take the dependence for granted, even when it was not obvious. In these days of uncertainty and confusion people want to be in no doubt as to what the basis of their thinking is. The ultimate justification of all Christian thinking has always been and should always be Biblical. This does not of course mean that every theological position should be supported by a proof text. In fact, Biblicism does injustice to the Bible and abrogates the liberty we have in Christ. "Rooted in the abysses of creation, but towering beyond the secret blues of heaven" said Henry Heine, the German poet, about the Bible. But the Bible stands for something. It is a witness. It is a witness to the givenness of God's word. The Christian theologian cannot go about his business, as if God's revelation in Jesus Christ does not exist.

For this reason we must see that in a Christian Conference on non-Christian Religions not merely a sound knowledge of non-Christian Religions but also of a sound knowledge of Christian theology is ensured. The ideal thing would be for each scholar to know both branches equally well. When this is not possible, it must be seen that both sides are sufficiently represented. Though at the Conference at Nagpur there were some good theologians, I am not sure that Theology was adequately represented.

Reckon with Western Thought

The second point to which I would like to draw attention was the tendency which seemed to prevail at the Conference to think that since we were intellectually on our own, and were no longer dependent on Western thinkers, that we must either ignore them or necessarily differ from them. Thiruvalluvar, in Tamil, laid down nearly twenty centuries ago that true wisdom consists in welcoming truth from whatsoever quarter it may come. Certainly there is difference in the background of Western scholars and Eastern scholars. A Western scholar will, for instance, find it hard to consider anything without first calling to mind what Plato and Aristotle have said on it. There may also be a difference in approach, and also a difference in the conclusions reached. But a comparison of Western and Eastern thought will often show both Western and Eastern thinkers disagreeing among themselves and agreeing with those across the boundary line.

The point we must bear in mind is that in the field of Christian thinking both Western and Eastern scholars are bound by common loyalties and start from the same presuppositions. Western scholars have been in the field centuries longer than we. It is necessary, if our thinking is to have any validity, that the conclusions of Western scholars must be reckoned with. When we go into the matter, we shall find that it is not a case of our recording our agreement or disagreement with Western thought, but our agreement or disagreement with particular Western thinkers. Neither as Christians nor as thinkers can we afford to ignore what others besides us have thought; and neither as Christians nor as thinkers do we have the right to disagree for the sake of disagreeing. In any case, we shall always find that, whatever be our motives or conclusions, we cannot help agreeing with some Western thinkers and disagreeing with others.

All Hinduism is not *Advaita*

The third point I would like to make here, which struck me with special force was that the Conference paid undue attention to one particular side of Hinduism and was disposed to dismiss in somewhat cavalier fashion another side of it. It is perhaps natural that a meeting of scholars should be more preoccupied with what other scholars say than with what others less articulate may do or say. More than this, in no other religion is its philosophy also an exposition of its religion than in the case of Hinduism. It was, therefore, somewhat inevitable that the Conference at Nagpur when it came to consider what Hinduism was thinking or saying should be largely concerned with its intellectual formulations. Nevertheless, while Hinduism is often the religion in which the Deity melts into the Absolute, it is also a religion in which the Absolute attains to extreme concreteness. If Hinduism is the religion of the *Upanishads* it is also the religion of the *Gita*. It is a religion in which many poets in many different languages have sung the most enthralling songs to the gods of their choice. As one sat in at the Conference at Nagpur, one felt that members were assuming a little too easily and almost consistently that Hinduism was tantamount to the *Advaita*, though a few, inconsequential people were given to the worship of Vishnu or Siva. It cannot be denied that of all the schools of philosophy *Advaita* has now, owing to one reason or another,

become the predominant school; but the gods also hold their own. This would be seen quite clearly, if we descended from the region of Sanskrit or English into the spoken languages of the country. Therefore, no one who desires to know the religion of the people of India at close quarters and wants to tackle the problems that arise, when Christianity goes among that people, can afford to dismiss the worship of Vishnu and Siva as merely sectarian.

Except for the points I have listed above, I have nothing but praise for everything in connexion with the Conference:

For the fact that the Conference was held at all.

For the calibre of the scholars who attended.

For the attempt to face honestly all issues involved in our task.

For the level of thinking and speaking that prevailed.

For the excellent arrangements of hospitality.

For all this I would like sincerely to thank the authorities of the Institute for the Study of Religion and Society.

GROWING INTO THE FULLNESS OF TRUTH

By Mr. Ranjit M. Chetsingh

The All India Consultation on Renascent Hinduism was one of the most hopeful symbols of a new creative spirit among Indian Christians concerned with the clarifying of theological thinking in our land. At the Consultation there was a genuine seeking and sharing as distinct from the usual anxiety to 'put out' something. To a 'non-professional', such as the present writer, what was most noticeable,—from the second day onward,—was the quite simple willingness to learn on the part of almost everyone present. There was little of the feigned, or to put it more kindly, perhaps, the assumed "I know" attitude which is the enemy of teachability where Hindu movements and modern interpretations put forward by Hindu teachers are concerned. Subservience to established modes of expression, oft-repeated words, and shadows of the half-closed mind were by no means absent. Names of Indian writers, both Christian and Hindu, still seemed to evoke, in some, reactions not exactly indicative of minds and spirits free from prejudice and open to the leading of the Spirit of Truth, the Light that lighteth every man. At times one was reminded of the attitude of a 13th century Vicar in France towards Angelo Clareno and Liberato, two extreme types of "spirituals" who had strayed into extreme positions in following what they thought was the teaching of St. Francis. They were sent on a mission to the heretics of Armenia. On their return after many experiences of 'perils among false brethren' they sought a quiet retreat in their home province. One of the Vicars of the region declared that he would "rather receive and shelter a band of fornicators in his province than these two men!"

The negative influence of some European theologians seemed to continue to blind some to what is valid in the experience of the mystics. It was encouraging, however, to see an Anglican Father putting forward quite simply the fact that the lives of many who are not Christians and with whom we are privileged to have fellowship and 'conversation' could not be what they are if they were not under the canopy of the grace of God. Some

of the statements made in the course of discussions betrayed the superficial character of the contact our people have with those 'outside'.

The Nagpur Consultation of 1958, let us hope, is only a prologue, and that much will follow. May the Institute for the Study of Religion and Society be used of God for this purpose. This can happen if the sons and scholars of the Indian Church are open to the disciplines to which Christian thinkers of earlier ages submitted themselves. A new orientation is called for. Some considerations for preparing ourselves for this are given below.

The Authority of the Bible

Christian thought and writing in India in our day is inclined to be on the defensive. It lacks somehow the note of joyous affirmation which came from the blind youth who had his sight restored by Jesus, or the woman on whom the truth dawned at Jacob's well as the Master held converse with her. We are concerned in India,—and rightly,—to guard our Christian heritage. But we betray an astounding unawareness of the different streams of thought and the varied forces which entered into the determination and formulation of that heritage. Take one part of this precious heritage which we possess, a possession with which the Christian Church can never part—the Scriptures. But there is a truth to be emphasised in this connection, namely, "*We possess the Scriptures*", in the language of Prof. Bethune-Baker of Cambridge, "*We ought not to allow them to possess us.* They are not an independent authority set over against the Church —They are the Church's own creation—*the creation of people like ourselves, after much Committee work and a good deal of what is known as 'lobbying'* (Italics ours). They have no inherent authority; general acceptance at the time, and use since, these are the credentials with which they come to us. They are high credentials; but they confer no sacredness or finality". We should not forget and we should help the average member of the Church in India to realise that the New Testament is the creation largely of the Church of the second century. We should save ourselves and our growing Church from falling into the error which some of our fathers of the Reformation fell into, namely, the error of setting up the Bible as an independent

authority, as though it was something given to the Church from on high to control for ever its teaching and its practice,— as though, indeed, the New Testament as we have it today, was the Christian Revelation itself. The Good News, as Foakes-Jackson has said, was the proclamation of a deliverance, not the appearance of a Sacred Book. The Gospel came as the very antithesis of the written Law. Those who accepted the Message preferred the 'living voice' to the authority of any document. To say this today when our fellow-Christians in this vast land are subjected to such authoritarian teaching by propagandists vested with power and influence, some native to our soil and some alien, involves a certain risk. But the pursuit of truth and its affirmation, or to use language made so familiar to us by our earnest teachers from over the seas, the task of witnessing and proclamation has this risk inherent in it. In days when partial familiarity with and even more partial understanding of Dr. Kraemer's emphasis on 'Biblical revelation' holds the field a true acquaintance with the character and making of our scriptures is urgently called for.

One more consideration with regard to our heritage needs to be borne in mind. Primitive Christianity, something that is so frequently appealed to, was full of ideas that few of us share today—ideas dependent on the science, the religious psychology, the political and economic situation of the time. The New Testament reflects them constantly. And, therefore, to quote Prof. Bethune-Baker once more "It simply is not true that the Bible is the sole source of Christian knowledge". We need to take the term 'word of God' in a larger sense, as meaning the light of such knowledge as comes by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Leading of the Holy Spirit

Here a word about the faith in which the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has a central place is called for.

This is not the place to recall even in outline the endeavours and struggles which lie behind the emergence of the Athanasian or the Nicean formulations of what the Church recognizes as the Christian Creed. But we might remind ourselves that there were rival claimants to recognition, *e.g.*, the Creed of the Church at Caesarea which in the metaphysical struggle between Arianism and orthodoxy played an almost determining part. But it should

be noted that "Arianism was prescribed and proclaimed *illegal for Roman citizens*", two years after the Second General Council (Constantinople A.D. 381) confirmed the Nicene Creed.

In all these struggles the role of 'the Emperor' was not without importance and its character was influenced at least as much by political as by religious considerations.

Need for Christian Charity

We need to remind ourselves, too, of the marked absence of the spirit of Christian charity which characterised 'Christian' champions of the truth in their concern for the safe enshrinement of a sound faith. No Christian gentleman can approve of St. Jerome calling a Christian disciple of the calibre of Pelagius 'the great fat dog of Albion'. For a pure and holy man he was admitted to be even by St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, his greatest opponent. Nor, indeed, can any modern judicious temperament fail to read with sympathy the cry of Nestorius in his Apology against Cyril who presided over the Council at Ephesus in 431 at which Nestorius was condemned, "Who assembled the Council? Cyril. Who was its head? Cyril. Who was judge? Cyril. And who the accuser? Cyril. Who the Bishop of Rome? Cyril. Cyril was everything".

The above considerations should help us to live up to the challenge of our times in post-Gandhian India. India is a confused and complex *melange* of faiths, hopes, fears, philosophies, theosophies, mystic religions and mysteries much as the world of the first and second century Christians was. And yet the factors, religious, social, political and geographical as well as the racial and national characteristics of those early Christians and their compatriots were very different from the heritage of the twentieth century Indian,—Christian or Hindu or of any other faith. We need to take to heart the counsel of that very catholic-spirited Quaker scholar of the U.S.A., the late Rufus M. Jones: "Fortunately we can make our way back even yet to the Headwaters of the mighty stream and feel, if only dimly, the purity, the splendour, the beauty, the mystery and the power of the River of Life as it burst forth from the eternal depths. But when we come down to the lowlands, where it now runs in its wide, though shallower, bed, we find merged in one stream

the indivisible waters from almost every land and people of the earth. We cannot recover the pure Galilean religion any more than we can recover Eden. We must build our own faith, not inherit one from the past. For better or for worse we are living in the world of the twentieth century, and our lives must be lived amid the complexities which the cumulations of many generations have produced. We cannot bodily lift and take over for our spiritual uses the religious setting or the intellectual outlook of any former period. We can find inspiration, kindling power, leadership, eternal truth, immortal words, and the most dynamic Person of all the centuries when we go back to the Alpine heights where the stream began, but we must work out our own Church, our own faith, our own body of thought, our own interpretation, our own social order."

THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE*

By The Rev. Canon E. Sambayya

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. John 14: 6.

I. The Way

The message of the Fourth Gospel is summed up in this one verse. The way to God as Father is the incarnate life of our Lord. There is no other way; but it is open to all. It is implied in the claim that Jesus is the Messiah. That the access to God is only through Jesus Christ is the heart of the Gospel as preached by St. John and St. Paul. The doctrine which St. John is here expounding is stated in different ways by the other writers of the New Testament.

In interpreting the threefold revelation of our Lord as the Way and the Truth and the Life, we should bear in mind the background against which this declaration was made. St. John gives a theological introduction to the farewell discourses of our Lord in which context these words occur. St. Thomas says, "Lord we know not whither thou goest. How know we the way?" This question implies a double doubt: doubt as to whither our Lord was bound; and, again, doubt as to what the disciples themselves should do when he was gone. Our Lord answers that he was returning to the Father by the way of death. As for the disciples, in order that they may come to the Father, he says, "I am the way". Christ's person is inseparably related to the destiny of those whom he draws to himself; the way of man is known only in so far as the way of God is known.

These words convey the claim of Christ to permanent supremacy in every circumstance of life. They are the practical expression of an all-embracing truth which may be stated in the form of two doctrines: (*a*) Right through the whole maze of human history and nature's movement to progress, there runs one supreme way; (*b*) Jesus Christ is that way.

We should bear in mind the fact that these words were addressed by one who knew well both the disciples and the mission on which he was sending them. Their primary relevance is to that situation. The disciples had been called to receive a message and to publish it.

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* Substance of Four Bible Studies given at the Nagpur Seminar.

But they were given to doubt. In that predicament they had to see a divine way in the things around them. If they did not see it, they would be wretched and helpless. We also are in that state today.

Before the ministry of Christ there existed a "way" which the disciples could inherit. It was contained in the ancient faith in the Lord God of Israel. Israel had been warned not to turn aside from the way which God had commanded. "Teach me thy way" is the prayer enshrined in a number of Psalms. The way of God was embedded in the ideal Israel—the Servant of the Lord, whose vocation was to illumine the Gentiles. The disciples were not, therefore, strangers to the idea of the way of God. But their faith was not strong enough. Knowing this fact, Jesus was trying to kindle their faith. His ministry, death, resurrection and ascension, augmented by the descent of the Holy Spirit, assured them of the reality of the way through faith.

When our Lord said, "I am the way," the disciples must have received it as an invitation to a life of obedience to him. They accepted that invitation, and turned their thoughts from their own lives to the task of proclaiming Christ as the way in respect of the dealings of God with man, and Christ as the way of God in human history. Their experience led them to see the way of Christ stretching forth into all ages and in all worlds. The way which the disciples found is given to us. It is the way of utter obedience to the Father's will and utter love of the brethren. They trod it and left on the earth their foot prints. It is ours now to follow the trail.

The departure of the Master from their midst was a crisis in the common life of the disciples. The Church also will face periods of crisis in almost every age. Today we find that the Christian faith is challenged from every corner. But we should not feel despondent. The answer which our Lord gave St. Thomas is sufficient for us also. "Show us the way," said Thomas "and that will suffice." Our Lord said to him, "I have been so long with you, and yet has thou not known me?" For I indeed am the Way.

II. The Truth

St. John's word for truth, *aletheia*, has both a Hebrew and Greek background. The Hebrew word, *emeth*, of which *aletheia* is the Greek rendering in the Septuagint, stood for faithfulness, truthfulness and permanence. Thus it is a moral category. Whenever God is described in the Old Testament as "the God of truth" (Ps. 31: 5), faithfulness to His covenant promises is implied. But in Greek thought *aletheia* is an intellectual category. It indicates truth as opposed to falsehood; reality as opposed to appearance. Because of the impact

of Greek thought on Judaism, the meaning of the word underwent a change. Truth (*aletheia*) is the test of what is known and what is to be done. The Fourth Gospel is an exposition of the nature of truth as revealed in Jesus Christ, set forth as man's moral ideal. His message is that from the life of God, which alone has reality and permanence, an activity of love has entered the plane of history in the Incarnation and brought the gift of eternal life into the present. Hence truth is not a system of propositions to be grasped by one's intellect but it is the manifestation of a personal being who demands one's devotion.

The relation of knowledge to truth had not been made clear in Judaism. But St. Paul tried to bring it out, especially in his preaching at Athens. It was the solemn unfolding of the Gospel, in a city reputed for human search for truth, as the sanction and fulfilment of knowledge. Athens was full of idols, a consequence of the decline of the search. The inscription, to an unknown God, on one of them served as Paul's text. The worship of an unknown God signified the restless fear of unseen powers which had become current in the minds of people. Paul defined it as reverence unaccompanied by knowledge. By preaching the resurrection as an actual fact, Paul related devotion to knowledge.

'I am the truth' is a pithy saying answering to the requirements of the hour in which it was spoken. Like the first declaration 'I am the way' the second declaration 'I am the truth' spoke comfort and hope to the faint hearted disciples in the upper room by disclosing to them the depth and range of the work they were to carry forward in His name. It speaks comfort and hope similarly to us who are perplexed by counter claims to the truth of the Gospel. It marks every truth which seems alien to Christ as a sign that the time is come for a deeper personal knowledge of Christ. Accordingly the burden laid on the disciples in the upper room becomes an image of the burden laid on the Church today.

If the Church today is satisfied with its tradition and identifies it with the truth, the future will be alarming. It is true that very few of us are in a position to challenge long established traditions. At the same time. it should be stressed that the Church's heritage of the truth proceeds mainly from the urgency to evangelise the world. As evangelists, we should live by the truth given to us in Christ, and go forward to proclaim it. " If you abide in my word " says Jesus, " you are truly my disciples, and then you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

III. The Life

St. John begins his Gospel with the words, "In him was life," and ends with the words, "but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name." Jesus has life in him, and he gives the life that is in him. The Fourth Gospel revolves round these two affirmations.

The close connection between truth and life is a recurring theme of the Johannine writings. This is worked out in detail in the discourse on the bread of life. It is stated there that there is fulness of life in Christ. The word salvation stands in the Bible for restoration to fulness of life. In his healing ministry, Christ is bringing men and women to wholeness. He fed the hungry and set free the demon possessed. All these are instances of imparting life.

In our Lord's teaching, the origin of life is God. "As the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself." This life is given to man. "As the living Father hath sent me and I live because of the Father, he also that eateth me, even he shall live because of me." In a further stage even man becomes a subordinate source of life. "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Our Lord speaks of himself as the true Vine, in which he asked his disciples to abide, in order to have life in themselves. In the high priestly prayer he say, "And this is eternal life that they should know thee, the only true God and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ."

Our Lord's life consists of two movements. "I came out of the Father and am come to the world." This is the first, which may be described as descent. "I leave the world and go unto my Father." This is the second, and may be referred to as the ascent. The descent was a climax of a long line of revelations. The ascent was the beginning of the gathering up of men upward to God. It is to this work that the Apostles were called to bear witness. In regard to it, our Lord said that "No one cometh to the Father but by me". The crown of the Christian life is the coming to the Father. This is to be gained through the Son who has revealed God as Father.

This is an exclusive affirmation, which has meaning in the faith that there is a unity of all things in Christ. It is from our point of view that the Gospel is exclusive. The fact is that its universality and sufficiency negates the possibility of an alternative. Its universality is such that we can say that all those who came to the Father came through Him, whether they had really known him or not.

THE MEANING OF CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT

By The Rev. John Radha Krishan

A Sympathetic Understanding, The Need of the Hour

Students of religion are well aware of the fact that many of the ancient religions of India are being revived in our time. Among them Hinduism is being revitalized in a significant manner. The leaders of modern Hindu thought are reinterpreting their faith in the light of truths discovered through a comparative study of religions. They are also engaged in making a fresh evaluation of the ancient Hindu thought in relation to the present-day scientific knowledge. This is the nature of renascent Hinduism. And as the Church is faced with the challenge and claims of this faith—in some cases aggressively demanding allegiance from the whole of India—it is called upon to give a clear guidance to the believer as to what the Christian criteria for an interpretation of rival religious claims are. In this paper an attempt is made to lay down a few of the basic Christian standards by which other religions may be evaluated.

In the context of the present-day set up of the world, in which mutual understanding, good will and friendly approach is necessary for existence, it would not help to brush aside the claims of Hinduism by dogmatic assertions of the Christian articles of faith without any effort to understand the problems faced by men of this rival faith. More and more people all over the world are beginning to realize that unless there grows a basic feeling of friendliness among nations and peoples, the future of human civilization is at stake. As a result of the exciting progress of nuclear sciences in the post-war world a greater sense of urgency than ever before marks the thinking of people all around the world. It is a happy thought that the Church in India is a part of this general awakening. The spectacular progress of modern sciences, however, is only one of the many modern phenomena directing the thoughts of men to deeper issues of life, and to better inter-personal relationships. Religious awakening all over the world should also achieve a similar purpose. In our day there has been a nervous growth of regional and world alliances emphasizing the fact of insecurity and distrust which weigh down human existence. And apart from the need of the hour and the trends of the time can it not be said without fear of contradiction that it is a natural expression of the spirit of Christian faith to seek to find avenues which will make possible a better understanding between man and man?

The Nature of Christian Discipleship

In such a pregnant situation the Christian is called upon to think clearly of the implications of the discipleship of Christ. Christian discipleship is a discipline of the highest order. It calls for a recognition of the complete mastery of Christ, an unconditional giving up of the self to the Master. Christ would have nothing less than the whole and unquestioned allegiance of a man. He claims exclusive possession of him who would be his follower. This is clearly borne out by a study of Lk: xv: 25–33. There, in a dramatic statement of his claims Christ emphasized (*i*) that nothing should come in between himself and his follower, not even one's "father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life" (v. 26); (*ii*) that discipleship is a calculated and deliberate choice: "Which of you desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish" (vv. 28, 29).

The implications of this choice in relation to any counter-claim on the believer from any quarter are obvious. The Christian cannot compromise with anything from any source which suggests an impingement on the sovereignty of Christ. He approaches any other religion from the basic fact of his discipleship.

The criterion of discipleship, then, makes a demand upon the Christian in his approach to renascent Hinduism. He must know his faith as fully as possible. One often hears of the cost of discipleship in terms of what one has to give up. A definite act of commitment involving the complete giving up of the self to Christ is preceded by a conscious recognition of the "cost" in terms of reversing the scale of worldly values. Yet in terms of Christian experience there is no greater experience of the realization of self than in this act of giving over to Christ. Recording a similar experience in his own life St. Paul said, "Indeed I count everything as loss because of the *surpassing worth* of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. iii: 8).

It is a good thing that the Christian is challenged to think through his faith in relation to its claims upon himself as well as in relation to the mission of the Church in general. The challenge can prove a blessing in disguise to the Church in India.

The Implications of Christian Commitment

It is not denied that the Church has always been engaged in its main task of making Christ known among men. In the self-abnegation of Robert De Nobili, or the ceaseless labour of William Carey,

the consecrated brilliance of Henry Martyn or the missionary zeal of Sadhu Sunder Singh, the self-less service of Pandita Ramabai or the utter devotion of Narayan Vaman Tilak one reads the story of commitment to Christ. These and a host of other persons would express their joy of witnessing among the non-Christians in the words of St. Paul (Phil. i: 21). "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." It was in obedience to the divine call that they went out among people and by the power of God in their lives brought others to him.

The source of their power was not anything within them, it was in their commitment to Christ their Lord. In relation to other religions, some of them thought of the Christian faith in terms of 'fulfilment', others in terms of 'discontinuity'. Some of them interpreted Christianity as a 'judgment' upon other religions and others saw nothing in common between the two. In their methods of approach they may have erred. Nor do we judge them by the number of converts they made. But we thank God for their concern for man arising out of their devotion and obedience to the Son of Man. The Christian is committed primarily to a person and not to a set of doctrines or dogmas. He has no reason to approach another religion as such, but his approach is to a religious man to help him to believe. This was also the approach of Jesus Christ.

Because the Christian is committed to the Lord Jesus Christ his heart is burdened with love for man for whom Christ died. Precisely because he is committed his responsibility towards the uncommitted increases. He can neither take the position of a gnostic nor that of a 'superior caste man'. On such a basis there can be no real fruitful contact between persons belonging to different religions. He should not forget that at one time he himself was uncommitted and yet under the love of God. As he faces renascent Hinduism his approach must be determined by the life and character of Jesus Christ to whom he is committed, and who is his norm. The implications of the criterion of Christian commitments are:

(1) that the believer should not be misled by clever argumentation or doctrines, but must test everything from the fact of the historicity of Christ, from the point of view of the *Person* to whom he is committed. Grown to the 'measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' he should no longer "be tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles" (Eph. iv: 14), but must be guided by the fact of Jesus Christ.

(2) His obedience to the God-Man should lead him to an attitude of humility and *sacrifice* in his approach to the total human situation,

"Have this mind in you which was also in Jesus Christ who existing in the form of God counted not being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but humbled himself.....becoming obedient even unto death, yea the death of the cross" (Phil. ii: 5–8).

The cross is the glory of Christianity. And happily, to a Hindu, the cross is one of the most attractive events of the life of Jesus. This is the only way to any real achievement. What is needed is the identification of one's life with the way of the cross. This is the judgment of God upon the Church through the simple, humble and sacrificial lives of many a non-Christian, that the Church has become a complicated, proud and ease-loving organization. How does the life and character of Christ compare with the life and character of the average Christian today? The non-Christian tells us that it is not the cross which repels him from Christianity, but the life and character of the followers of Christ.

In spite of the danger of a 'Donatist heresy' it must be said that the Church in India is called upon to show examples of lives after the manner of Jesus Christ. The Christian does not earn his salvation by being simple, humble and virtuous, but these characteristics naturally belong to a Christian. A brief study of the sixth chapter of Romans will suffice to show how naturally the new life is obtained in Christ.

God's Activity of Reconciliation

And lastly, there is the criterion of God's activity of reconciling the world unto Himself. Students of the New Testament know how the writer of the letter to the Hebrews describes the continuing activity of God in reconciling men unto Himself: "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (Heb. i: 1, 2). May we not say that he still speaks to men through the Son! The present writer is convinced that in a correct understanding of the activity of God among men lies the basis for an effective Christian-Hindu dialogue. Let us see if this is not so.

God is our creator not in the sense of making us Christians and non-Christians once and for all, but in the sense that He began to make and continues now this same generating process. God makes no distinctions of value so far as 'persons' are concerned. His love goes out to the whole creation. There are no human situations outside of the love of God. The description in Acts 2 and 3 of the day of Pentecost and the subsequent brotherhood of believers show clearly how eager God is for men to be reconciled to Him through repentance and faith in Christ.

May we not view this activity of God in terms of the Pauline concept of reconciliation? "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and *gave us the ministry of reconciliation*; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, *not counting their tresspasses against them*, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" (II Cor. v: 18, 19).

Herein lies the basis for a real universality—the nature of God's activity among men, reconciling, not counting their tresspasses against them. It was this concept of God's work of reconciliation which made St. Paul one of the greatest Apostles to the 'Gentiles'. Before God took hold of him he was a caste man, but afterwards he became a new man—no longer a Jew, but just a man under the grace of God. Instead of hatred, love filled his heart. God's concern became his concern and the gospel of Christ crucified became synonymous with his life. His words are remarkably relevant to our present study. He almost gives us the message for the Hindus: "We are ambassadors, therefore, on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God" (II Cor. v: 20).

The message of the Christian must be the message of reconciliation. This is not the reconciliation of a Christian with a Hindu, nor of the Christian faith with the Hindu religion, but of the Hindu with God. But the Church has been interested more in 'conversion' than in reconciliation. The former aims at a change in one's point of view, the latter at a change in the person. The former centers around man and his religion, the latter around the nature and purpose of God. Therefore the Hindu today does not feel the need of conversion.

We must shift the emphasis from man or religion to God. Reconciliation there must be between a non-Christian and God in Christ. The Christian is committed to God's plan of reconciliation through Christ, the Saviour. The Hindu is a man who is not yet reconciled to God in Christ. The Christian must help him by personal example and loving concern to know Christ in whom is the fullness of life.

These then are the three criteria of Christian approach to renascent Hinduism—discipleship, commitment and reconciliation. The subjectivity of the nature of discipleship and commitment is counterbalanced by the objectivity of God's activity of reconciliation. The first two work to direct our eyes on self and Christ, the third on the non-self and God. Together the three criteria would work to make possible a loving and sympathetic approach to the non-Christian.

CRITERIA FOR A CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

By The Rev. William Stewart

I am not too happy about the formulation of the title which has been given for this paper. It could too easily suggest an approach at once difficult to follow and open to serious questioning in itself. It hints at a picture of the Christian sitting in judgement on a variety of religious systems, or parts of such systems, like an examiner who will expect to find some answers of which he can approve, because they conform to a Christian standpoint, and some which he must reject because they do not. The weakness of such an approach is both that it calls for an external assessment, which may be legitimately resented by others as patronising and ill-informed and because it implies a kind of intellectual comparison of systems quite foreign to the Biblical approach of a direct presentation of the Gospel to man in his need. It is therefore hardly a set of criteria which I shall seek to present.

The Christian's Standing Ground

Fundamental however to any Christian approach to man, wherever he may be and whatever may be his beliefs, must be an awareness of what is the Christian's own standing ground and that is surely nowhere to be found save in the fact of the risen Christ. We begin with the resurrection faith, the mighty truth that Christ was raised from the dead, without which there would have been no Gospel to proclaim, no living Church, and no New Testament record of the fact of Christ. I doubt if we are always sufficiently aware of this tremendous and unique basis for the Christian faith. We are familiar with the truth that the Gospel is rooted in history, in the fact of Christ and His Cross —but are we sufficiently conscious of the truth that it is with the risen Christ that we begin, that every single witness to Him knew the reality of His risen power, and it was in that tremendous light that they saw and recorded the facts of His life, His work, His teaching and His passion?

It is this, therefore, which in turn gives us the vantage point from which we read the Old Testament, those Scriptures which men searched and which bear witness of Him. Without Him those Scriptures would never have been known to us at all, but would have remained the Scriptures of an isolated little Jewish community; but through Jesus Christ we receive them with their authenticated testimony concerning the works of God. In Christ therefore we have authentic news of

God the Father and the proclamation of what He has done in the world.

Then further, it is from the Resurrection of Christ and its great sequel at Pentecost that there has flowed the whole on-going work of His Church from the first century and until now. Kraemer is surely wholly justified in reminding us that the Church by its very nature is an apostolic body, finding the very meaning of its existence in the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, so that it must needs carry forward as its essential work the things which its Lord *began* to do and to teach. Here there is a message and a life not at all of the Church's own making, but written into the very substance of its being which it is *bound* for ever to share with other men whom God has loved and to redeem whom Christ has died and risen again. This is the proclamation of the things that God has done, the message of reconciliation, the Good News of God which contains the word of hope for the world. It is within the fellowship of this Church that we cannot but acknowledge and worship the only true God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, God the Holy Trinity. We know no other God.

Here then is something which is not at all to be compared to a set of religious speculations or formulations which could be set in fascinating comparison with other religious systems. It is also not something which can be described as a type of religious experience which might be compared with other experiences of devotion. It is the life which is constituted by the facts of which the *Kerygma* speaks. It is something which indeed implies certain great truths about God and His nature, as also about man as he is before God, about sin and about grace, and indeed that whole body of truth which it is the task of Christian Theology to try to make explict. Yet even this is not to be presented as basically an intellectual formulation so much as part of the very statement of the Good News of God which calls men to life.

It is in the light of the *Kerygma* that the Christian is called upon to meet man, man in the wholeness of his nature and his need, and that means also religious man. Our concern here is therefore with a Christian theology of religion, an endeavour to understand more clearly how those whose only standing ground is in revelation of God in Jesus Christ are to meet with man as a religious being. The criterion is Christ Himself, the Word made flesh, that which God has done.

Composite Nature of Renascent Hinduism

The particular form of religion with which we are concerned here is "resurgent Hinduism," and am I wrong in suggesting that as we

try to learn more of it, especially as it has been expounded by many of its interpreters, it proves to be a bewildering amalgam of teachings and practices, some of which spring from ancient Hindu sources but others of which bear a remarkable resemblance to what we learn in the Christian Church? There is here the plain fact that while there is certainly a conscious and at times an enthusiastic desire to assert afresh the ancient Hindu values, there has also been the absorption of large elements both of vocabulary and of conceptions which come from the Gospel. At times this is conscious and avowed, at other times it is unconfessed and may be unconscious. In the pattern of worship which we see in bodies like the Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj the Christian influence is unmistakable. But is there not a like influence behind the type of prayer meeting which was developed by Gandhiji? When we come to a book like Dr. Radhakrishnan's commentary on the *Gita* it is impossible to evade the conclusion that much of the meaning which he reads into that classic would never have occurred to one who had not been familiar with Christian teaching.

All this being true we shall unquestionably meet in resurgent Hinduism a great deal which closely resembles Christian teaching for the simple reason that it has to some extent been derived from Christian teaching. But of course it is also true that we shall find manifestations of religious development which are not due to this influence. There are whole areas of Hindu life and teaching which have remained unaffected by such influence, but the common spiritual hunger of humanity will lead to formulations which bear a resemblance to many things to be found in the Gospel. This being so, we might try to apply the kind of criteria which a person like Dr. Dewick has found it possible to base in his Hulsean lectures on what he considers to be the clear teachings of Jesus, and then, using such criteria, we might select certain points for our approval. But it is difficult to see what possible usefulness there could be in such an undertaking in comparison with the thing which really matters, namely, the encounter with the mighty facts of the Gospel itself. If we seek to applaud certain "elements of truth" which men have formulated, but which stand unrelated to the great source and centre of truth which is in Christ, may we not be found to be even bearing false witness to the Gospel, applauding a human endeavour to build his own security when our calling is to share the Good News of God?

When, as Christian thinkers, we contemplate the fact of man as a religious being, there is certainly no need for us to deny or to overlook the evidence of God's activity in man's religious search. That God is at work also in the religious faiths of men is surely to be understood in line with the scriptural assurance that He has ot left Himself

without witness, as also in line with the abiding truth of St. Augustine's Confession: "Thou hast made us for thyself and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee." It is these truths of the unresting concern of God for His children and of the restless human heart which cries out for Him which underlie the religious quest and the religious practice of men. This being so, we shall expect that in the light of Christ we shall be able to observe many expressions and records of experience in non-Christian religious practice which will not need to be repudiated when Christ is acknowledged as Lord, though there will not be one of these which will not be transformed. In this sense, Farquhar was saying something of permanent importance when he called the Gospel "the crown of Hinduism".

In illustration one may cite the well known saying of Narayan Vaman Tilak, the Marathi Christian poet, who declared that "it was over the bridge of Tukaram's poetry that I came to Christ". It is a remarkable thing that the religious devotion of Tukaram was directed to the crude idol of Vithoba at Pandharapur, and it is only an extreme doctrine of the relativity of all religious belief which could equate this manifestation of the deity with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet the fact is there that Tukaram experienced and eloquently expressed his longing for God and ventured to claim Him as a God of grace, and a later Christian, who found his utter assurance in what God had done in Christ, confessed that the same God had used Tukaram to awaken him. Here is a tremendous fact, yet we cannot miss the vital and decisive thing for Tilak which was that the end of the story for him was the encounter with the living Christ.

Again there is the story of Pandit Harshe of Poona, who after a long and earnest religious pilgrimage found his peace in Christ. His quest included experience of life in the Prarthana Samaj with its endeavour to worship one God, and Pandit Harshe found much here which he never wanted to repudiate. Nevertheless, according to his own testimony the truth of God broke with power on him only when he realised the significance of these words from St. John's Gospel: "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

In the light of such experiences as these, one must surely be content to permit the person who has been awakened to the truth of God in Jesus Christ, to acknowledge with thankfulness much in his earlier quest in which he recognises that the hand of God was upon him. But in view of the overwhelming importance of the decisive event in the story, namely, the encounter with Jesus Christ, one is equally compelled to question the worth of any attempt to make a graduated assessment

of what might or might not prove of lasting value in another religious experience. What is here, undoubtedly, is a community of need, of experience and, increasingly through our mutual contacts, of a common vocabulary in which as Christians we ought to be able to engage in real conversation with others. But as regards the estimate of other religious claims there remains no criterion save Christ.

Two other illustrations from experience in village India may be worth mentioning: (*i*) I was once put in touch with a village school teacher who was slowly dying of an inoperable cancer. To him in his bitter need there seemed no message at all in his own religious community, but to him in that desperate condition through a period of some months one did find it possible to bring a word of real assurance from the Scriptures which declare the promises of Him who is with His children even in the darkest places, and which tell of the Cross of our Redeemer. As one tried to bring that word to this stricken soul one was acutely conscious of the fact that it was worth doing only in the light of the fact of Christ. The Communist, who has in fact nothing at all to say to a person in this kind of need, and who forgets how very much of the greatest need of men is of this kind, might dismiss it all as the mere administering of a drug to soothe the sufferer. The religious teacher, who denies ultimate truth in any one religious view, might claim that he could equally well have been comforted by any one of a variety of messages, stoic and other, which might have been efficacious whether true or not. But actually, there is something intolerably frivolous and irresponsible in any presentation of such a message to a dying man unless it is rooted in what is absolutely true. One felt the need of a real authority to speak, without which one would only have stood by helpless and dumb. What gave authority to declare the word of hope is just the tremendous fact of Christ, the Cross itself seen in the light of the resurrection, the Good News of God. (*ii*) Again I think of a conversation in another village with a gracious, kindly man who practised his religion faithfully and with apparent satisfaction, and who talked tolerantly of all religions, including the Gospel, for "are not all religions really the same?" In conversation with him I was moved at last to read from the Gospel of St. Luke the story of Calvary, asking him if he had heard this before? The effect was profound, an utter transformation of that urbane atmosphere in which nothing really mattered; for here was authentic news of God which shone in its own light.

All this brings us back to the fact that the essence of our task is the presentation of the Good News. Religious conversation in India is often complicated by the way in which, in Hinduism, religion and philosophical reflection are inextricably bound up together. In con-

sequence we are constantly being called on to work out, argue for and defend points of view, which, though based no doubt on human experience, are essentially the brilliant formulations of the human mind. Even in the most eloquent acknowledgements of our inability to utter one authentic sentence regarding ultimate reality, we remain bound in the pride of the intellect which can assert the principle of agnosticism with utter confidence. By contrast, the Gospel comes with the disconcerting but saving announcement that God has revealed Himself, that we do not depend on what we have managed to think out about Him, but with what in fact He has done, in which He had revealed Himself. Therefore, though we do indeed know that His thoughts are not as our thoughts, yet also we can say, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded...."

Task of Presenting Christ

We return then, finally to the particular problem of resurgent Hinduism and the task of presenting Christ to men bred in its teachings. Here a writer like Holsten in his book, *Das Kerygma und der Mensch* has brought out the sobering fact that the very permeation of society with Christian ideas, to which at times men point with satisfaction, can be not so much a *peæparatio evangelica* as a kind of prophylactic to prevent men from receiving the Gospel. I see that someone has spoken of this process as a using of the powers of God against God, drawing from the Christian faith ideas which are grafted into or ascribed to the Hindu religion, as a means, conscious or unconscious, of resisting the claims of the Gospel. In this sphere we recognise something of what Karl Barth has spoken of as religion as unbelief.

Now, part of the resistance which uses this method is certainly that protest of man's pride against the offence of the Cross which is universal, and there is no sparing any man that encounter. Here is the Hound of Heaven from whom men have always fled, the kicking against the pricks which St. Paul found to be in vain, the wrestling with our mighty Opponent, terrible and inexorable in His love, who will not let us go till we acknowledge that all that was gain to us is worthless compared with Him. The humbleness which calls us all to the foot of the Cross is something required of every man.

But must we not acknowledge that, from the very form in which the Gospel has been given to India this offence of the Cross has been hidden behind a very different offence, and that one which surely it was legitimate for men to resent? This is the offence not just of foreignness but sometimes of the arrogance with which the

Gospel was declared, and the contempt shown to the ideas and practices of religion which represented the actual situation in which men stood to whom that Gospel was brought. It is the heritage of this attitude and its consequences which still works among us today and leads men with energy to try to find and formulate a religious message which will draw on their own treasures from the past, and repudiate what has come from outside. This is what constitutes the challenge to us which is in keeping with the very incarnation itself, that respect for men which will teach us the patience needed to understand where they are and to seek to enter into their experience and their need, and which will, there in that situation and relation of love and respect, share the Good News of God which is Jesus Christ. This is something which was seen with complete clarity by some of the outstanding missionaries of a past generation, for example by a man like William Carey, embued with the most fervent evangelistic conviction but who yet felt the sheer necessity to master Sanskrit and learn of the scriptures of those to whom he came. It is this which today, after a period in which it has been too much neglected, calls us to try to understand the meaning of the resurgent religion which is all around us, and to declare Christ in a language which men can understand. For, when all is said and done, it remains true that our calling is not to contrast and compare but is to preach Christ. Dr. Devanandan's words of 1944 remain apposite:

> The task is neither to Christianise Hinduism nor to Hinduise Christianity; it is to render the Christian Gospel intelligible to India, making it relevant to our present needs, emphasising its particular adequacy to meet our circumstances, speaking God's message to us in the language of India's every day commerce.

A BASIS FOR CHRISTIAN-HINDU CONVERSATION

By The Rev. Principal P. David

Sympathetic Study and Understanding of Religions

Prof. Toynbee says: "I do not believe that we should be able to recapture our relations with religion and reinstate religion in its true place, unless we face the perilous undertaking of trying to extricate the essence of religion from the accidental non-religious additions to it which have gathered round each of the great historic religions."[1] There is some truth in this statement. But the separation of the essential from the non-essential is not easy: may be it is impossible. Therefore we have to adopt another method, the method of *sympathetic study and understanding*. The word *sympathetic* is to be underlined. Sympathy is a Greek word meaning the capacity of entering into or sharing the feelings of another or others. The Sanskrit word *sanubhutih* conveys exactly the same sense.

One of the papers presented at the Ghana Assembly has this to say on the matter: "The missionary from non-Asian lands often moves among certain groups, such as the ignorant and the handicapped. He is ready to spiritualise the physical and material needs of those with whom he gets into touch. It is, I suppose, true that often there is no real encounter between persons. There is also no meeting of mind with mind. For the people whom he meets tend to become objects for aid or assistance and the relationship as between that of the object and the subject,—what Martin Buber describes as the relation between "I and Thou'—the sustained encounter between the Christian and the non-Christian, seldom developed."[2] In this expression of opinion, Dr. U. Kyaw Than of Burma has only modestly stated what has been a fact. The fact is: There is no attempt on either side at *sympathetic study and understanding* of the point of view of the other.

Self-Examination in the Context of One's Faith and Practice

Some time ago, the writer of this paper made a close and sympathetic but scientific study of three major religions (Hinduism, Christianity and Islam) in order to investigate and establish not only a basis for conversation between the adherents of these religions, but

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[1] A. Toynbee, *Christianity and the Religions of the World*, p. 85.

[2] *I.R.M.*, July 1958, pp. 156–57.

also to prove how far every adherent, no matter to which religion he belonged, had strayed away from the true basis of his religion. I quote below part of a section summarising the findings.

> "The results of the investigation are these: The declared views and beliefs are in one plane and the practised ways in another; the published religion is different from the practised religion—a gulf lies between the principles and practice.
>
> The errors of the definitions of the major religions are: (1) considering religion as impersonal; (2) the consequent gulf between the principles and practice; (3) the confusion, already noted above, of the declared goal with the realised achievement; (4) the consequent assertion of selfish pride and tyranny."[3]

A further investigation traced the deeper grounds of this gulf between principle and practice to the two-dimensional character and constitution of human nature. How do our Christian friend and Hindu friend discern a basis of religious conversation between them? The results quoted above of the investigation of the three major religions should reveal that, so long as the *systems* of faith are examined independent of the life and practice of the adherents, there probably cannot be discovered a *sympathetic* basis of conversation between persons. An honest and rigid self-examination within the context of one's own religion alone will help the situation. Only on a relentless analysis of one's own faiths-and-practices can a Christian and a Hindu arrive at a common plane of conversation.

The Scripture and the Creed of the Church

Christians in general take as God-given guides the New Testament, the Old Testament, and the Creeds and Confessions of the Church. Let us start from the last, the Creed of the Church. The first article of the Apostles' Creed reads: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." What do we mean by this article? I believe that God has made me, and all creatures under heaven and upon the earth. The God who made me also made the Hindus, the Christians, the Muslims, and the others of the earth. They are all within the operation of His grace and providence. I believe He has a *concern* in me. How can I deny to Him the same or similar concern in *others* whom He has created? On this basis a Christian has a concern in a Hindu, and both can converse with each other upon the fatherly love of God and upon the problems of their creaturely existence.

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[3] *Gospel Witness*, August 1954, p. 291.

St. Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles; and his concern for them was so obvious in his writings that it hardly needs proof by quoting the texts. His speech at Athens (Acts 17), and his analysis and interpretation of the problem of God's election (Rom. 9–11), and his presentation of the message of God's love and salvation which should include the Jew and Gentile, the free and the bond, the rich and the poor—all reveal the great mind and the religious catholicity of Paul. Even St. Peter, who at first shrank from following the truth, later clearly saw in a God-sent vision that salvation is for all—and not for the Jews alone.

The life and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ definitely and boldly carries the message of God's salvation also to other than Jews, and the operation of His providence and grace to include all human beings. Only consider several of His parables such as that of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 25–37), and His message at Nazareth (Lk. 4: 16–30) and the great commission He gave to His disciples (Matt. 28: 19) "Go ye into all the world, and make disciples of all the nations."

The Old Testament no less confirms the basis we are searching for. No doubt it deals primarily with God's choice of a people and with the vicissitudes of the life and history of that people in relation to God. But the teaching of the great prophets and their insights rightly discerned the wider operation of God's providence and rule. There was not only an ethical note in their teaching but also a universal application of God's care and concern. The strong advocates of this broader view are: the books of Amos, Ruth, and Jonah. The major prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—all reveal this universalism even more profoundly in certain sections. They derive this from their realisation of the inwardness of religious experience on the one hand and the wider implications of God's grace on the other (Jeremiah 31: 31–34, Isaiah 19: 25, 56: 6 ff, 49: 9).

Man as Fellow Creature

I have been reading with interest the small booklet, *The Gospel and the Hindu Intellectual* written by Dr. P. D. Devanandan. He says in it: "Theological approach has tended to overlook the underlying anthropological concern. Perhaps the time has come now for us to focus attention on the human aspect in God's redemptive act—on man as he really is, the creature for whose sake Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead. The burden of our message to the non-Christian world would then relate, in this generation certainly, to the Christian view of man and his destiny."[4] I am inclined to agree with him.

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[4] P. D. Devanandan, *The Gospel and the Hindu Intellectual*, *p.* 12.

The profound insight discovered by Socrates—Know thyself—has never been properly appropriated either in the West or in the East; in the West it has developed into a materialistic anthropocentrism, and in the East, especially in India, into a theistic monism. The Buddhist revolt against the Upanishadic theism indicates the serious concern for man seen and suffering as opposed to the Brahman unseen and immutable; but this *concern* was suppressed by Brahmanism until in the present generation it has been revived by Mahatma Gandhi. Everywhere man is the centre of attention and study. Therefore the content of the basis for Christian-Hindu religious dialogue should be man—man in the concrete situation of life. The Christian can meet and talk to the Hindu about religious matters firstly because both of them are human; secondly because they both have a religious experience.

Let us observe how St. Paul in the New Testament and Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita* arrive through self-scrutiny at a common base of conversation—they both grope their way; they both have the same burden of heart and mind; they both speak the same language expressing their inevitable and helpless situation of human existence; they both take refuge under the wings of a supreme being for redemption.

"And we know not which of the two were better for us,
Whether we should conquer, or they should conquer us;
What very ones having slain we wish not to live.
They are arrayed in front of us, Dhartarastra's men.

My very being afflicted with the taint of weak compassion,
I ask Thee, my mind bewildered as to the right (duty):
Which were better, that tell me definitely;
I am Thy pupil, teach me that have come to Thee for instruction."

(*Gita* II. 7, 8)

"We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

(*Romans* 7: 15–25)

On reading these two passages, traditional Christian thought will immediately defend itself by denying the commonness of the base; it would argue that the ideas of sin, redemption, human nature, right, etc., in the two religions or *systems* of faith are different; and therefore, the common base suggested is an illusion. But this would have been so had there been no search for truth and self-criticism in the context of one's religious faith and practice on both individual and collective levels. We have to consider Paul and Arjuna in the concrete situations of life; and try to understand their problems sympathetically.

We need to take seriously to heart what Dr. E. W. Thompson has said about this approach through sharing our religious concern on these vital human issues. "Having come to live in such a world as ours," writes Thompson, "We are co-labourers in every way. We are, both of us, travellers through this world. The beginning and the end of our pilgrimage have not been made quite plain to us, and perhaps we may hold different views about our origin and our destination. One thing, however, is certain—that we are on the road together; and we meet as it were for an evening in the Dharmasala before we part and resume our journey on the morrow. We are strangers and sojourners here, as all our fathers were. How great, then, is the need that we should be kind and courteous in our conversation, and that we should help and strengthen each other in the finding of the path of Truth, and in keeping to it, when found."[5]

[5] E. W. Thompson, *The Word of the Cross to the Hindus*, p. vii.

THE CONTENT OF A CHRISTIAN-HINDU DIALOGUE

By The Rev. C. Murray Rogers

When a Christian meets a Hindu and they talk together it is not a matter of finding a link between two incompatible and separate units. Cultural and linguistic forms may place a barrier between them but there remains a basis of their unity which is not dependent upon such sociological factors.

They are both men, created by God, redeemed by Christ, sustained by the Holy Spirit. The reason for the Hindu man's existence is that God has done something for Him in exactly the same way as He has done something for the Christian. The events which lie central to God's action, the life, death and resurrection of Christ, are the events which bind the Christian to the Hindu. " Finish, then, with lying and tell your neighbour the truth. For we are not separate units but intimately related to each other in Christ " (Ephesians 4: 25, J. B. Phillips translation). A real dialogue or meeting can take place only where there is already common ground and that common ground is Christ, the Lord.

Both need to be Converted

There is indeed a frontier but it does not lie between the Christian man and the non-Christian man, but within both. The key to this, I believe, lies in the Biblical conception of the Gentiles, a matter which has been explored briefly by Dr. Walter Freytag in his " Gospel and the Religions". The heathen or Gentiles are those for whom God has acted and still acts but God's saving action has not yet reached them. They are people who live in opposition. But—and it is a big but—the line does not run between Jew and Gentile, between heathen and Christian, but within each. The unredeemed, " old man " of the New Testament, is to be found in me, a Christian; it is a possibility and a fact in me, in exactly the same terms as the unredeemed " old man " is to be found in the non-Christian. " Try your own selves, whether ye be in the faith," says St. Paul (2 Corinthians 13: 5). " Do not live any longer as the Gentiles live " (Ephesians 4: 17), for we, in large measure, are heathen still. We need to be converted as does the Hindu.

The old distinctions upon which the Christian-Hindu dialogue was carried on do not hold. I do not stand here, a Christian, over-against my friend there, a Hindu. The distinctions are, if you like, existential, dependent on our immediate relationship to the world of divine grace. I can find no grounds in the Bible for believing in a " state of grace," some theological happy landing ground from which

we look over the fence to those who are not yet landed and call to them to jump. A Christian is a man for whom tremendous things have happened and are happening, and because these things have happened life is to be understood and lived in Christ.

If we take to heart the falsehood in the distinction between a Christian man and a Hindu man and if we see that the dimensions of the Divine involve both, then all ground for the making of comparisons is cut away from under our feet, either in the realm of faith or doctrine or in the realm of morality. The content of the dialogue cannot then be a mutual discussion concerning the Hindu idea of grace and the Christian conception of grace. It cannot be basically in terms of comparison at all. No more can it be a comparison between Christian moral teaching and Hindu moral teaching, between the Sermon on the Mount and the *Gita*: even less can it be a comparison between the so-called goodness of the Christian and the so-called weaker morality of the Hindu. Comparisons are excluded and therefore a sense of superiority is excluded. We do not point to a higher morality, nor to a higher wisdom, nor to a deeper spirituality.

Dialogue Co-terminus with Life

How then do we meet and talk? As men, as contemporary men, with the pressures of secularism upon us, with poverty for many a paramount and endless worry, with problems of choice to face daily, with a crying need to find some meaning in our existence. We meet as men weighed down with bitterness, bitterness about our own failure and bitterness about others; we meet as men struggling with man's perennial battle against himself and his sin as described by St. Paul in Romans 7. The content of a dialogue between Christian and Hindu is as wide as man's life. Far from it being circumscribed by religion, religion will be a small and comparatively unimportant part of the whole. This content does not then need to be drawn up like an agenda, with important topics at the top and others less important which may have to wait over until the next meeting. The content is life, mine and the other man's. Any dialogue between Christian and Hindu will, I believe, remain unreal and lifeless until we know that the Christian Faith is through and through secular, "religionless" as Bonhœffer has said.

In so far as I am living in the real and actual world of Divine Grace I will bring to this meeting with my friend, the Hindu, an understanding about Reality, about Life, which he will not have. The Reality by which we exist as Christians will be relevant to the hopes and needs and problems and joys which we will share together. The validity of the Christian Faith will not be in my hands but in the hands

of God, the Holy Spirit, who will be between us as we meet. It is more than possible that the word, God, or theological ideas, or the name of Jesus Christ will not be once mentioned—for we may be discussing the place of discipline in education or the criteria by which one judges a film, or the present tangle in the relations between " East " and " West", or even artificial fertilisers—but whatever our common concern the Living God will be there and the world of Divine Grace will be there.

The content of the Christian-Hindu dialogue does not depend then in any way on the verbal use of certain words, God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, grace, and an hundred more. The dialogue is already there before I meet my Hindu friend and my responsibility is to interpret truly to the world of Hinduism, to any man in the real world, these other " Christian " dimensions of the Divine, which of course are not in fact, or exclusively, " Christian " at all. As Dr. Raymond Panikkar has said: " Christianity as ' pleroma Christi ' does not integrate anything because everything that *is*, is already integrated in Christ some way or other."

Certain Difficulties and Obligations

There are certain great difficulties in our accepting the content of a Christian-Hindu dialogue as being co-terminus with life:

First, when others make claims, religious claims, it is extraordinarily difficult not to make counter claims. In this we want to give validity to Christianity ourselves, to prove that the wisdom that is in Christ defeats every other wisdom. We stand continually on the edge of the gnostic heresy and frequently on the wrong side of the line !

Secondly, and related, there is a tendency common among men, and not less among Christian men, to claim moral superiority. We may not in actual words thank God that we are not as other men are but frequently that is in fact the position we take. Finding it easier ourselves to be Christian Pharisees than Christian men we claim virtues that oftentimes do not belong to us and teach men that Christian Faith is for those who work their passage morally or intellectually rather than for " beggars seeking bread". In conversation with Hindus it is striking how many imagine that we claim a higher morality for ourselves, whereas few have gathered that we Christians are rejoicing in the freedom of forgiveness.

Thirdly, we are largely unrelated ourselves to the world of men. There is great need for us to come out from behind our high walls of exclusiveness—psychological, economic, cultural and religious exclusiveness.

No matter then at what point the dialogue may begin, we Christians have certain obligations. There is the obligation to venture out into the Hindu world, which involves so much more than study. To see and feel the appeal of Hinduism involves us in contemplation of its inner spirit and riches, for until we feel the appeal of Hinduism I doubt whether we can interpret Christ to the Hindu. Such venturing out is an exacting and wearing experience for it presupposes an openness not simply of mind but of heart. This presents to the Christian a spiritual demand to be more and more aware of the Lordship of Christ over every man, over every religion and system of thought, over everything, for until we have found Him in the Hindu, that Hindu will not, I believe, meet Christ in us.

Dr. Kenneth Cragg (whose *Call of the Minaret* is more relevant to the Christian-Hindu conversation than anything I have yet read) has said: " the heart of the Christian relation to any situation is to invite man to Christ within it." This means, as Dr. Cragg says, deepening man's criteria of what the situation is all about as well as a preparedness on the Christian's part to enter into the Hindu's real question or problem with full seriousness and understanding. Christ will be found among men and our opportunity as interpreters will come when we take Hinduism at its deepest significance.

It is there at the deepest reach of all—no matter what the question under discussion may be—that the Lord, both of Hindu and of Christian, will be found. To quote Kenneth Cragg again: " When Augustine was at the end of his tether in an experience of disenchantment with every external system that he knew, the Church was steadily demonstrating before his eyes its capacity to solve in personal terms the problem of holy living. This was his salvation. This is our task still. We must be living such lives, interpreted through Christ, as may compel others to take their disenchantment beyond the frontiers of any one system into the basic sickness of man, and deepen their discontent into genuine yearning."

That point of genuine yearning, of search beyond one's own adequacy, is the point at which the Third Person makes Himself known in the dialogue and both Christian and Hindu find themselves being addressed. He is still coming where we are. The content of a Christian-Hindu dialogue may be anything under heaven and our Lord Jesus Christ is always to be found there ahead of us.

A CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION OF RENASCENT HINDUISM

I. The Christian Standpoint

As the Christian Church endeavours to fulfil its commission from its Lord to bring the good news of Christ to all nations, it is bound always to address men in their actual situation. For this reason it must seek to understand the needs, aspirations and convictions which make men what they are. The Church in India is made up of those who themselves are part and parcel of this nation, and it is aware of the many tokens of new life in the Hindu religion which deeply affect Indian society. The Church must understand and interpret this awakening in order that it may more effectively perform its distinctive service.

We are aware that there are other approaches to the universal phenomenon of religion, but members of the Church are bound to interpret all religions in the light of Christ the Lord, crucified and risen. The Christian faith is based not on speculation concerning the nature of man and the cosmos, but on the acts of God witnessed to in the Scriptures and interpreted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

God has created man and intends him for fellowship with Himself. Man in his God-given freedom has rebelled against God, and become bound in the consequences of his sin. He never, however, escapes God's continuing concern to redeem him. In Jesus Christ reconciliation has been made between God and man, and this is entirely through God's grace, not man's achievement.

God is concerned with all men and is at work among them. Evidences of His activity are to be found in man's religious quest but the forms of this quest are entangled in man's rebellion. In the practice of all religions, including Christianity, God's gifts are used against God. There is no easy way of discerning and interpreting the activity of God in one religion or another. We humbly acknowledge our blindness. Nevertheless, we are obligated to seek to discriminate in the light of Christ, between what is of God, and what is not, however partial this evaluation may be. We have the costly task of understanding what is happening in the living religions of today, and the purposes of God within them. We recognise that there are elements in non-Christian movements which are tokens of God's activity, sometimes judging the Church and sometimes opening a greater opportunity for the Church's witness to the Lordship of Christ. While we

acknowledge the work of God in these movements, as Christians we are bound to commend to all men the total and universal claim of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour of the world.

II. Affirmations and Concerns of Renascent Hinduism

Christians in India, especially of this generation, need to have a fuller knowledge and deeper understanding of the changes which have overtaken contemporary Hinduism.

The acceptance of the new rational temper and scientific outlook characteristic of the modern world have led to radical revision of traditional views about human values, material goods and social relations. The impact of Christian ideals has been a contributing factor in the renascence of Hinduism as manifest for instance in the new emphases laid on a reordering of society, the need for purposive effort to redeem the here and now in history, and the active concern to service in the cause of humanity in distress of want and need. We realize, at the same time, that the renascence is in part also due to the welling up from within of the time-old religious heritage of the Hindu affirmations of faith, reasserting with new vigour their relevancy for our day.

The Sarvodaya Movement is expressive of the widespread social concern, especially to reconstruct the village community by drastic reform of the land tenure system, to the end of establishing a new pattern of society based on social justice and the worth of the individual. Sarvodaya intends to realize the welfare of all by equitable distribution of land, providing equal opportunity for economic development and freedom of self-expression to every man, irrespective of caste origin and credal belief. The leadership of the Sarvodaya Movement is to a large extent inspired by the Vedantic affirmation of the oneness of all.

Another new development is for Hindu *gurus* and *swamis* associated with Mutts to conduct preaching missions in order to expound the fundamentals of the Hindu faith and practice. They emphasise the need for every Hindu to be informed about their Scriptures. They urge that all traditional rites and practices be faithfully observed. They seek to promote a new attitude of worship, a new respect for ritual observances, and a new appreciation for things of the Spirit. In a real sense this is an attempt at widespread religious education. The purpose is to discourage turning away from traditional faith to other religions or forsaking it for modern secularism. The primary intention is to help Hindus, by and large, recover the faith of their fathers as totally adequate to meet the religious needs of modern man in New India.

There has been also, of recent times, a revival of theistic forms of religious faith. On the one hand, serious efforts are being made to bring together diverse traditions of Vaishnavites and Saivites, as a result of emphasis on the doctrine of God as one though many in form; on the other hand, the differences between the two groups are being reasserted. In either case, a renewed zeal is visible in temple worship, and many new shrines are being established particularly in some areas of the country.

We may not leave out of account in this connection such aggressive movements of religious revival as the Rashtriya Svayam Seva Sangh, the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Maha Sabha. They stress the claim of Hindu nationalism, that India is for Hindus alone, that Indians recognize no higher claim on their loyalty than that of Hindusthan. They are often inclined to inflame the religious sentiment of the common people against the followers of other religions and against everything which they consider alien to our Indian cultural heritage.

The Vedanta is still the primary religious basis of modern Hinduism. Influenced by the Ramakrishna Movement and a large number of contemporary scholars, Hindu intellectuals believe that the Vedanta is adequate to comprehend not only all forms of Indian religion, but also every other religion known to man. They affirm that religion consists in realising God by man, and that any religion is as valid for this goal as any other. At the same time they believe that Vedanta leads to ultimate religious truth in its emphasis on the advaitic principle, according to which man and the world are the manifestations of God or the Absolute Brahman. In essence every form of religion is a valid path to the attainment of this supreme goal. This truth, they affirm, had been realised and proclaimed from time immemorial by Indian sages, and today this is being preached with a new conviction and claim. Therefore, it is maintained that the Vedanta ought to be the one religion for India, serving as the most appropriate and adequate basis for the nation's all-round development and that the Vedanta is the ultimate goal, acknowledged or unacknowledged, for mankind everywhere.

This cursory review of some of the more recent forms of contemporary Hinduism is, in fact, a confession of the inadequate knowledge we have, as Christians in India, of what is happening in our environment. We are genuinely perplexed by the apparent inconsistency in the effort to bring together the new and the old. We dimly perceive in this new movement not merely the workings of human ingenuity but also the deep stirrings of the Spirit of God. We need to understand the processes of thought and the nature of the spiritual experiences which have led our Hindu kinsmen to emphasize these

new concerns and affirmations of *sanatana dharma*. The times call for a "conversation," a careful listening to what Hindus themselves have to say about the fundamentals of their faith, the new meaning-content they put into time-honoured Hindu religious terms and concepts, and their modern exposition of the texts of their Scriptures which provide the authoritative sanction for their new stand. Such conversation would also provide an occasion, we venture to hope, for a new form of Christian witness in our day "being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear".

In all these new expressions of contemporary living Hinduism we are impressed by certain obvious factors which to us Christians seem to indicate tendencies of departure from the traditional beliefs of Hindu orthodoxy, without in fact repudiating them. They express at the same time new affirmations and concerns which can only be regarded as modifications of the classical Hindu doctrines necessitated by the strain and stress of the new climate of thought and the contemporary setting of historical circumstance. The reality of world-life and the imperative needs for responsible action in the living present have charged the traditional doctrine of *Maya* with new meaning-content. No longer is the claim so confidently made that *Karma-Samsara* explains all human events. Instead the affirmation is openly stated that man should rise and build his future on the given present instead of being passively resigned to the present as irrevocably determined by the past. The empirical individual whose existence was not believed to possess ultimate reality in Advaita is now invested with dignity and worth as a living person in a net-work of relations with other persons. There is real concern to safeguard human liberty, to recognize man's inherent rights as man, and to evolve an order of society which will promote responsible relations among men in a conscious sense of solidarity and justice. In the light of this new view of man in society the concepts of *varnashrama dharma* and *svadharma* are being re-stated to accord with the modern ideals of a socialistic framework and the individual's rights and obligations within it. Indeed the new description of Hinduism as *sanatana dharma* serves to include within it all forms of religious beliefs and practices as well as all types of differing cultures prevailing in India. It is another indication of the concern of modern Hinduism, on the one hand to emphasise the wide sweep of Hindu religion and on the other to affirm the basic unity underlying all the many expressions of religion, that they all lead to the ultimate goal of God-realization. The *Bhagavad Gita* is singled out from among the many classical Scriptures of Hinduism as the one authoritative basis for the affirmations and concerns characteristic of Renascent Hinduism.

III. A Christian Attitude towards These Concerns and Affirmations

Renascent Hinduism is concerned to provide the basis for the new structure of Indian Society. In this whole concern we have observed a new appreciation of the worth of the human person as such, of the responsibility of each for all and of the need to find significance in history. This development is the outcome of many pressures on human thought that include not only secular movements but also the permeation of Christian ideas. In it the Christian recognises clear tokens of the working of the Spirit of God. In these concerns the Christian is also involved and keenly interested, but he knows that he must proclaim Christ as the true Lord of every human society. In making this proclamation he does not imply that any society can be based on Christ in the same way as the Church is founded on Him. Christians should be conscious of the distinction between the Church and society and recognise that God works outside the Church in the social structures and cultural developments of the world. We should beware of the common illusion of religious people, both Christians and Hindus, that it is organised religion which is responsible for all the advances in society. The Church is commissioned to exercise its ministry of redemption and recreation in Christ in every aspect of society. It is likewise the calling of the Church to be the *fellowship* in which men may see the pattern of true community which was God's purpose in Creation, and be the channel of power for renewal of society.

In the modern forms of Hinduism there is much sincere effort to find God and live in communion with Him. The recent resurgence of popular worship in some areas and the widespread emphasis on reading the Hindu Scriptures have various motivations, but among them there is certainly an acknowledgement of man's insufficiency and the search for a source of wisdom and security outside man. We acknowledge that God is at work in this search and we are assured that He, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is "the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" and that "the prayers of such seekers have ascended as a memorial before Him". Nevertheless, the Revelation in Christ shows us that no previous knowledge of God excuses us from Christ's call to repentance, and that we must beware lest lofty religious experience, whether Hindu or Christian, should tempt us to self-glorification and thus blind us to God who humbled Himself in Jesus Christ.

Renascent Hinduism claims that *sanatana dharma* is *the* religion for India. It recognises, however, that an adequate faith for India must be universal, and this realisation of human solidarity unites the modern Hindu with the Christian in a vital common concern. But

Christians cannot agree that the theory that each man must develop his religious life according to the genuis of his own inherited tradition is a proper basis for a universal faith. Neither can we accept the inference that there is never any need for change from one religious group to another, nor that such a change necessarily uproots a person from the setting in which he can best develop. Conversion to Christianity is not a change from one natural community to another, but the event in which a person's total allegiance is given to Jesus Christ as Lord, and this involves membership in His Body, the Church. There is an obligation upon Christians to demonstrate this truth, by eliminating caste within the Church, and by preventing the Christian Community from becoming a new "caste" or "communal" body in India. It is an essential part of human freedom to be free to follow one's religious convictions. It is our hope that modern Hindus. who value human freedom, will recognise that a person has a right to choose a religion of whose truth he is convinced, without the risk of social ostracism.

The Vedanta claims to comprehend all the religions of the world, in the sense that it clearly sees the one goal of all religions. This universality is based on the belief that the One Absolute Reality is present in everything, and that the many objects of man's devotion are expressions of this one Absolute. The Christian, on the other hand, lives by his faith in the Universal Lordship of Christ. It was He by Whom all things were made, Who at a particular moment in history became Man. By His life, death and resurrection He has redeemed the world and reconciled man to God. This is the Lord Who in all generations comes in judgment and in fulfilment to claim His own, and it is the purpose of God to sum up all things in Him. While we, therefore, believe that in sober fact the redeeming work of Christ for all men is accomplished and that even now Christ reigns in the world, this reign is still hidden from the world and is perceived only in faith, and it is only in the open and willing acknowledgement of this Lordship that all men can find their peace. Such a faith can never be fitted into a subordinate place within a more general or universal conception of reality. To the modern Hindu, as to all other men, the Christian must commend the claims of Jesus Christ the Living Lord.

THE BASIS AND CONTENT OF A CHRISTIAN-HINDU DIALOGUE

I. Why a Christian-Hindu Conversation

God in Christ has created and redeemed all mankind and offers us the fellowship of his Holy Spirit in the Church which has been commissioned to declare to the world the Gospel of Christ. A Christian is a witness in whatever he says and does. His witness becomes proclamation when he makes explicit to the world what God in Christ has done.

The context of communication arises from the common humanity the Christian shares with his Hindu fellow-citizens in the manifold common concerns, sufferings and joys of life. But in the Christian Faith we know that we are bound still more firmly to our Hindu brothers by the fact that we together live under the Lordship of Christ whether this Lordship is acknowledged or not. Therefore in Christ to call our Hindu neighbour "brother" is no empty formality but an expression of the nature of Christ's universe.

For this reason our frequent lack of contact with Hindu society, our ready willingness to live apart from the full life of the country and its many national aspirations reflects our little faith. God works in the world which is His world; the Lordship of Christ includes all men and all human situations, and the Christian is therefore privileged to know that every place is his home and every man is his brother.

What God has done for all in Jesus Christ should drive us out of our timid seclusion to rejoice in the company of all men. Today India is building a new society based on human dignity and social justice and the Hindu religion is stirring with tokens of new life in its concern to provide spiritual foundations for the life of the nation. In this task of national reconstruction, Christians and Hindus are faced with common responsibilities as fellow-citizens; they have therefore a special reason to enter into conversation with each other on the true meaning of life and the destiny of man.

II. The Christian in the Conversation

When we face frankly the spirit in which we have often conversed, either formally or informally, with Hindu friends we have to admit that our attitudes have frequently been most unworthy of our calling

in Christ. Far from being ready in a quiet and relaxed spirit to await the outcome we have been intellectually arrogant, impatient, and quick to see unworthy motives. We have found it easier to express ourselves and our position than to listen in a teachable spirit. This happens because we have failed to rely on the Holy Spirit who alone convinces man—ourselves and others—that Jesus Christ is Lord.

This calls for self-examination and self-criticism and a consequent looking away from ourselves to our Lord whose mind should be expressed in each Christian disciple. Such preparation in contemplation and prayer will result in a greater spiritual expectancy; we shall expect to learn from our Hindu friend, we shall expect Christ to speak to us as to him. Knowing that the Holy Spirit is with us both as we talk, we will be able in confidence to leave the issue in His Hands.

Our easy assumption that God works among us Christians alone is plainly and openly called in question by the creativeness which has been given in our own country to those outside the Church. Such creativeness is from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ whether it be found as moral creativeness in Sarvodaya or as scientific creativeness in the sphere of building up the nation. The word of reconciliation in Christ which has been given to us for transmission to others needs to be spoken into all situations; for every creative power of man has possibilities for both good and evil. We can only speak this word if we accept in mind and heart that these gifts of creativeness are from God.

When we Christians keep apart from members of other faiths we keep apart from Christ. Until we all acknowledge His Lordship in every sphere of life we can never know the fulness of Christ.

III. Content of the Conversation

Conversation may be formal or informal. Informal conversation includes chance meetings, normal professional intercourse, and the ordinary gathering together in social life.

(*a*) *In informal conversation*, we must remember that the content and course cannot in any way be predetermined. We cannot decide beforehand how the talk will proceed.

Any aspect of life, in its widest range, may be the subject of our conversation for God is concerned with the whole of life. This means that no human concern lies beyond God's caring and therefore our responsibility.

Although many conversations will be around our mutual religious concerns, we would be wrong to expect every discussion to end in religion. "Cheap" and valueless religious conversation is too

easily come by and we congratulate ourselves falsely for having had the opportunity to talk about God. Idols, and more especially idolatrous concepts, are not the monopoly of any one religious group.

Whatever then may be the subject of the conversation, it is our responsibility to speak in terms which are intelligible. To use words which may have content for the Christian is not necessarily to say anything meaningful to the Hindu, and *vice versa*, for we each bring to the conversation our own world-view and our own silently accepted presuppositions. It is this very variety which contributes both to the extreme difficulty and also to the richness of our meeting together. This richness for each of us is experienced when in mutuality and respect we enter realms of thought and experience of which we were unfamiliar before. Our opportunity as interpreters of Christ will arise when we take the other man's standing ground with full seriousness and at its deepest significance.

If we follow this demanding way of conversation, opportunities will naturally emerge for either of us to make explicit the insights and implications of our faiths. We Christians must learn to depend upon the Holy Spirit to tell us both when to speak and what to say for ultimately He is the Lord of Truth leading us into all truth. It is this very Spirit who, taking our manifold discontents and distresses, deepens them into genuine yearning for the Living God. This is God's opportunity in speech and action.

(*b*) *A formal conversation* is one in which Christian and Hindu meet for a prepared objective and unimpassioned understanding of each other. The primary purpose will be to seek better understanding of one another's religious commitments, the nature of the truths underlying those commitments, the studying together of new trends in the living religions, and a conversation on differing concepts such as education, politics, the state, family, religious liberty, and other living issues. It will include the explicit content and exposition of the Christian faith, where relevant, just as it will include the explicit content and exposition of the Hindu faith. Such formal conversation should lead to a more intelligent understanding of each other and in many cases to greater co-operation in common social tasks.

In this connection we commend to the Churches and Christian institutions the following suggestions to further the Christian study of renascent Hinduism and to further Christian-Hindu conversations. The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society may take the initiative to help make these suggestions practical.

(*i*) That a serious study of renascent Hinduism be undertaken, and suitable literature be made available to the regional areas in order

to create a better understanding of these movements to those concerned in the matter.

(*ii*) That the Churches encourage all Christians to take advantage of whatever contacts are possible (*e.g.*, inter-religious cultural programmes) in order to help the meeting of different religious groups.

(*iii*) That Christian scholars take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Indian Philosophical Congress.

(*iv*) That the possibility of holding seminars on religious and philosophical questions in university centres be explored.

(*v*) That the *ashrams* avail themselves of the facilities and contacts already made to promote serious and sustained Christian-Hindu conversation.

(*vi*) That seminars be held and literature produced to instruct the clergy and laity on contemporary Hinduism.

(*vii*) That the contacts already made through Bible Correspondence Courses be taken advantage of to distribute suitable literature on the Christian faith and Hinduism.

SEMINAR ON A CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO RENASCENT HINDUISM

Place: The Christian Council Lodge, Nagpur.

Dates: Monday, October 13th to Friday evening, 17th October 1958.

The Objects of the Seminar are to:

(*i*) understand the religious claims of Renascent Hinduism and to interpret them in the light of the Christian Faith;

(*ii*) prepare the way for a fruitful religious dialogue between Christians and Hindus by establishing the basis and exploring the content for such dialogue.

PROGRAMME

Chairmen: Bishop Kulandran, Jaffna and Mar Chrysostum, Kottayam, will be co-Chairmen of the Seminar.

12*th*	4–30 *p.m.*	*Opening meeting—Purpose of the Seminar* P. D. Devanandan, Bangalore.
13*th evening to* 15*th Noon*		*Papers on the two main topics followed by discussion.*
13*th*	6 *to* 7–30 *p.m.*	*The Ramakrishna Movement.* V. C. Samuel, Bangalore.
14*th*	10 *to* 11–15 *a.m.*	*Contemporary Saivism.* John Piet, Vellore.
	11–30 *a.m. to* 12–45 *p.m.*	*The Jagadguru, Sankaracharya of Kanchi.* P. D. Devanandan, Bangalore.
	4–30 *to* 6 *p.m.*	*Criteria of Christian Interpretation.* William Stewart, Serampore and John Radha Krishan, Jabalpur.
15*th*	11–15 *a.m.*	*The Basis for a Christian-Hindu Dialogue.* S. W. Savarimuthu, Tambaram.
16*th*	11–30 *a.m. to* 1 *p.m.*	*Content of a Christian-Hindu Dialogue.* Murray Rogers, Kareli.
15*th afternoon to* 16*th evening*		*Meeting of two Groups.*

1. *The Religious Claims of Renascent Hinduism and the Christian Interpretation*:

Chairman: Bishop Kulandran.

Secretaries: Ananda Rao Samuel and John Carman.

2. *The Basis and Content of a Christian-Hindu Dialogue.*
Chairman: Bishop Mar Chrysostum,
Secretaries: D. J. Ambalavanar and Murray Rogers.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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BOOK REVIEWS

Christianity among the Religions of the World. By Arnold Toynbee, London, Oxford University Press, 1958. Pp. 116. Price 8 *sh.* 6 *d.* net.

Of recent times Toynbee has been interested in promoting cordial relations among the major religions of the world. He has undertaken this mission because of grave misgiving that unless religious rivalries are brought to an end, and leaders of religious thought everywhere join forces, the common adversary of the collective worship of human power, as represented by Nationalism and Communism, would overwhelm mankind in the near future. He views with alarm the spread of secular culture and rapid technological advance, especially in Asia and Africa. The dreaded consequence of this development will be idolatrous forms of man-worship.

Originally delivered as the Hewett Lectures for 1955 in the United States, this book is an earnest plea to Christians, in the West in particular, that they come to terms with people of other religions before it is too late. Toynbee claims that there is a basis for agreement among the religions of the world in that all great religions accept that (1) man is not the spiritually highest presence known to man; (2) that man ought to take sides with good against evil ; and (3) that those concerned with the nurture of the things of the Spirit in this life ought to come to grips with the problem of suffering. If this is so, in Toynbee's mind, there is no reason why people of all religions should not co-operate and harness religious enthusiasm to these common ends for which all religions should work.

The trend of events and movements in our contemporary world would seem to indicate that as people are brought closer together, by the annihilation of space and the general acceptance of technological values as contributing to the welfare of man, they lose sight of the Spiritual. They become earth-bound and man-centred. Strong power groups based on ideologies which exalt the nation and collective man spell disaster, for they reckon without the persisting fact of evil and the Supernatural.

According to Toynbee the association between Christianity and Western culture is only partial and temporary. Therefore although Western civilization may disappear in time, the Christian faith will continue to be a living spiritual force in the world for ages to come. But the future of Christianity and its continued usefulness will depend on how effectively it can ally itself with other non-Christian religions now prevailing in our world. So the plea that Christianity set about two tasks immediately: (1) to purge itself of its Western accessories; and (2) revise its traditional understanding of its uniqueness. Toynbee does not advocate a syncretistic religion. He only commends the giving up of all exclusivism without giving up one's convictions about the validity of faith. And strangely enough Toynbee suggests at the same time that Christianity should not give up its missionary activity to propagate the faith. This is because he recognises in the Christian claims certain significant spiritual values. These according to him are (1) the vision of God as loving, to the extent of sacrificing himself for the salvation of man; (2) the conviction that men ought to follow the example that God has set them in his Incarnation and Crucifixion; and (3) more than all, that Christians should endeavour in their daily life to pursue this Christian ideal in the here and now.

All that Toynbee says may not be easily dismissed. There is an earnestness about this plea which certainly appeals with arresting relevancy to Christian laymen

who fight shy of theological controversies, but see in the spread of secularism a danger to all living religion. Therefore this book is an attempt to think seriously of what is of pressing concern to the Christian layman. Toynbee comes nearest to the truth perhaps when he says that the Christian today must find the answer of faith to contemporary issues without in any way compromising on the fundamentals of his creed. These two issues are: (1) How can we as Christians work together with men of other faiths for common ends while admitting the fact of religious pluralism ? (2) How can we, at the same time, continue to proclaim the Gospel and press home to thinking men in our day the claims of Christ without causing any unwholesome religious rivalry which would endanger human community ?

Toynbee does not give satisfactory answers to these questions. But there are things in this book which he has said, with profound conviction and in world perspective, that should set earnest Christian people everywhere seriously thinking. We may not agree with the sentiment of the closing words of this arresting book, but we certainly must take to heart the challenge: 'In one of his last pleas, Symmachus has put on record these words: "It is impossible that so great a mystery should be approached by one road only". The mystery of which he is speaking is the mystery of the Universe, the mystery of Man's encounter with God, the mystery of God's relation to good and evil. Christianity has never answered Symmachus. (So holds Toynbee) To suppress a rival religion is not an answer. The question raised by Symmachus is still alive in the world today. We shall have to face it in our time.

P. D. D.

A Faith for the Nations. By Charles W. Forman. (Laymen's Theological Library Series), Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1957. Pp. 94. Price $1·00.

This is a laudable effort to interpret the relevance of the Christian faith in our modern world, and to show that in a real sense Christianity is a faith for the nations, because it speaks to the conditions of all men. Dr. Forman begins by describing how in our world people are closely drawn together, whether they like it or not, by common needs and interests. True basis for unity, however, can be found only in a common faith based on true understanding and willing acceptance of God's loving concern for the world of men. This concern has been revealed to us in the life and work of Jesus Christ. The heart of the Gospel is that God in Christ has manifested his love for all men. The Christian faith, therefore, lives by this new commandment which enjoins us to see through and beyond the divisions which separate, to a basic kinship and solidarity in the deeper levels of the spirit which is of God's design. Christians must not forget that what God has done in Christ Jesus is for all men. If they did, it would be at their peril.

In other religions we do come across many beautiful *ideas* about the nature of God and his dealings with men. But nowhere is there any declaration of what God has done for men. The faith of the Christian, on the other hand, is founded upon God's mighty act, which binds mankind together in a new way, a belonging together with God in a manner of which they have had little previous knowledge or experience. Our author goes on to show that the task of Christian missions is to testify to this new unity which knows no separation, nor any sense of superiority. The Christian faith, to quote Dr. Forman, 'sees most deeply the unity of all men —unity by creation, unity by community, unity under God's judgment and unity in God's love, which brings forth love among men. In such a faith lies the fulness of the world's unity. The Christian mission is an expression of that unity'.

The unity which the world longs for, however, is not to be confused with mere uniformity. There is always room for diversity in any understanding of the oneness of all mankind. Race, culture, patterns of social structure, all these need not necessarily lead to conflict. Our author points out, 'All believers are to become one people not in the sense of being all alike but in the sense of living in love and concern for each other. Therefore it is possible to reach the level of complete unity and still have the most complete diversity'. As a faith for the nations, Christianity should not be identified with any particular culture. What does happen is that the impact of the Christian faith on human culture in its many forms induces a change from within, so that they may be more fully themselves. A Christian missionary is not trying to 'change' people so much as he is trying to make them aware of what they really are in the new relationship established by God's act in Christ. Moreover, the Gospel is not an *idea* which has sprung up in the human mind: it is something God has done. Ideas do not have to be told. Deeds must be reported. So the Christian has the responsibility to tell others, and to live in the faith that God's deed must result in our deeds.

Although the book is written with American readers particularly in view, it treats the whole issue of the relevance of the Christian faith as established from within the human situation which prevails everywhere. In so doing Dr. Forman has contributed no little to a true understanding of the human situation as it really is, on the one hand, and to a clearer insight of what the Christian faith truly stands for, on the other. In consequence the Christian missionary obligation is set forth with fresh conviction and sympathetic understanding of non-Christian religions.

P. D. D.

The Word of the Cross to Hindus. By E. W. Thompson, Christian Literature Society, Madras, 1956. Pp. 175. Price Rs. 4·50.

This is a reprint of an earlier work originally published by the Epworth Press, London. The author has, however, thoroughly revised this edition, "to bring it up-to-date, and especially useful in India at the present time". Mr. Thompson had spent the best part of his missionary career in India as an evangelist among educated Hindus. In a sense this book is the outcome of his rich experience in interpreting the central fact of the Christian faith, in terms intelligible to the Hindu mind.

It is evident on almost every page that such a task involves careful and sympathetic study of Hindu religious literature, as well as a clear understanding of Christian doctrines. Put it also needs a profound sense of humility, the constant awareness of our own human limitations, in dealing with such eternal themes that concern God's mysterious ways with man. Mr. Thompson has drawn pointed attention in his preface to a significant warning of Dr. Moberly in his classic work, '*Atonement and Personality*', which has challenging relevancy to Christian evangelists at all times. "Our explanations at their best are still always partial explanations .... Our insight into the doctrines may be adequate. That it should be exhaustive is inconceivable. All explanations must be given with this reserve.... There is a sense in which every Church period—there is a sense perhaps in which every Church member—must find its living interpretation in his own terms for himself."

In the first part of the book Mr. Thompson gives an account of the death of Jesus, which he rightly indicates is the central event of Christian history. The records we have in the Gospels provide ample evidence that here we are dealing

with fact and not fiction. The question which puzzles any serious enquirer is, why Jesus, the godly man that he was, should have died such a death. The author points out that three main causes contributed towards that end: Jesus's teachings about God and man's duty differed so radically from beliefs then current: Jesus made claims for himself which seemed preposterous to religious orthodoxy; finally, what he taught and what he was seemed to the vested interests of his day disturbingly revolutionary. But for all said and done, what happened on the Cross is not entirely explained from our end in terms of human understanding. For, in the concluding words of this section, "In the hour when Jesus died, God was most to be seen and found on earth in him who hung upon the Cross: then at that moment, the event in our world with most divinity in it, was being transacted. The Word of the Cross was a new word of God to all sinful men: the like of it had never been heard before. God truly spoke and God truly acted in the Passion and Death of Jesus".

The second part of the book is an attempt at interpretation of that death on the Cross in terms of certain generally accepted categories of Hindu religious thought. Taking such Hindu concepts as *Avatara*, *Karma*, *Yajna* and *Tyaga*, the author tries to indicate how these Hindu religious theories about life and Reality fail to provide satisfactory explanation to this central Event in human history. Mr. Thompson's method of approach has much to commend itself. Without leading the Hindu inquirer into barren fields of controversy by setting him on the defence every time, far the better way is to set him on the path of further inquiry in the search of Truth, and to serious consideration of the entirely new meaning content that the word of the Cross puts into the categories of Hindu religious thought. The author's treatment of these Hindu concepts is both scholarly and sympathetic, and his vivid illustrations in relating them to corresponding Christian beliefs are obviously drawn from years of evangelistic experience in close and intimate contact with Hindus of all types and cultures. This is an advantage which few people can claim to possess in India today.

The central point in this whole approach is that it rightly stresses the fact that perhaps the best apologetics for Christianity in India today is built on the concept of personality. Although the author himself does not make it his main thesis, he states the case for it effectively. "The inexhaustible suggestiveness of the religion of Jesus consists in this, that personality—the mystery of persons, their co-existence and communion—dwells at the heart of it. Who and what am I? and who and what is God? What constitutes the worth of personality? These are questions of eternal interest and concern. Individual soul (*Jivatma*) and Supreme Soul or Over-soul (*Paramatma*)—who are they, and what is the relation between them? A doctrine which makes God a merely transcendental being—the Creator of man and wholly separate from him—and man, a finite and subordinate creature, utterly distinct from God, cannot be final: it is not the whole truth and it does not satisfy. 'I and the Father are one' 'That they may be one as We are one'—what is the meaning of these phrases? They recognize the mystery of our being of the relation of us men to God; and they contain a profound suggestion of a fellowship and Unity in God of which we have but dimly conceived, which we can express still less perfectly."

Christian evangelists among people of non-Christian faiths will benefit by a careful reading of this book. It is invaluable especially to those who seek to interpret the Gospel to the Hindu. This is one of very few books which can be placed in the hands of earnest Hindu inquirers, for its friendly method of approach,

its understanding interpretation of Hindu beliefs, and its challenging interpretation of the Gospel make powerful appeal to further investigation of the claims of the Word of the Cross to the Hindu.

P. D. D.

The Christian Attitude to Other Religions. By E. C. Dewick Cambridge University Press, 1953. Pp. 220. Price 30 *sh.*

This book consists of the Hulsean lectures delivered in Cambridge in 1949. At that time the contemporary religious situation, especially as it concerned Asia, was less complex. Revolutionary political changes and rapid social advance in Asian lands had not yet radically affected traditional faith. The impact of resurgent historical faiths of Asia on the Christian West was only beginning to be felt. Dr. Dewick anticipating possible conflict in the future is gravely disturbed by the contemporary tendency among Christian evangelists to emphasise the claim of an "absolute, qualitative difference" between Christianity and other religions, which to him seemed both misleading and intolerant. He felt that the situation called for true Christian humility which was willing to recognize that non-Christian faith may well have apprehended some aspect of truth hidden from the religious insight of Christians. In the teaching of Jesus himself we can discover the principles which should determine the relation between the Christian and non-Christian religions, which neo-orthodoxy was apt to overlook.

It may also be claimed that Our Lord's personal example in his relations with the Samaritans was an outspoken condemnation of Jewish intolerance, and by implication, of Christian intolerance of other religions. More explicit is his teaching in the parable of the Day of Judgment when 'the nations'—which means the world outside Israel—will be brought before Him: in that division of mankind into the sheep for whom the Kingdom has been prepared, and the goats whose destiny is outer darkness, there will be many who find, to their surprise, that they are among the sheep, for they had not known that, in their practice of love, they had been serving Him. We are surely right in drawing a parallel and saying that our Lord will reveal Himself also as the God of those who follow Truth though, perhaps through the unworthiness of the Church, they fail to recognise their God in Him.

Biblical faith should distinguish between 'the Word'—the comprehensive purpose of God for his total creation and for man in particular—and the historic revelation of that purpose in Jesus. The 'Word' is that which was from the beginning, and "lighteneth every man that cometh into the world". In the words of William Temple,

> "By the Word of God—that is to say by Jesus Christ—Isaiah and Plato, Buddha and Confucius uttered and wrote such truths as they declared. There is only one Divine Light, and every man in his own measure is enlightened by it."

Jesus of Nazareth is conditioned by the limitations of time and space. So that Christian faith should be guarded in claiming any exclusiveness or absolute finality to the revelation of God in Jesus. To quote Dr. Dewick, "We believe that in Him we find the *highest* and *fullest* truth, that must determine our judgments on all the major issues of religion, and a *distinctive* truth, that is not found with equal clearness elsewhere", but "we do not consider that the Christian attitude excludes the possibility that God may also have truly spoken to men through other channels". Consequently our author sincerely believes that a Christian, while recognising the

reality of the difference between religions, may rightly take part in inter-religious gatherings and discussions, especially if held in an atmosphere of prayer and worship.

A Christian believes in the Word of God—the purposive plan of God for the remaking of this world. This is the Gospel disclosed by God himself in Jesus Christ. If a man does not accept this, he cannot claim to be called a 'Christian'. By the truth of this Gospel all religions (including 'Christianity' itself) are judged. But any understanding of that truth by us men can be, even at its best, only imperfect. So it can happen, Dr. Dewick argues, that Christians, believing that the whole truth is indeed in Christ, could yet feel that they could in fact learn much of spiritual truth from men of other religious traditions without disloyalty to their own faith.

It must be granted that such an attitude towards non-Christian religions is not what Christians both Catholic and Protestant, have held these many years. On the contrary, the more rigid doctrine of the Church in the Middle Ages and also in the years following the Reformation, inculcated an attitude of hostility towards "the unbeliever", whether heretic or pagan, which found expression in the most barbaric cruelty. Besides the direct teaching of our Lord in the Gospel, it is also to be noted that this approach to the non-Christian religion which Dr. Dewick advocates is, in terms of human relationships, more closely akin to our Lords, command of love and as being more nearly in accordance with the mind of Christ, a doctrine which enables men to approach their non-Christian neighbour in a spirit of love, which involves not only a desire for his ultimate salvation, but also a respect for him as a child of God.

G. B. J.

The Gospel and the Religions. By Walter Freytag, I.M.C. Research Pamphlets No. 5, SCM Press, London; Price 3 *sh.* (In German 1956, In English 1957); Pp. 39.

The German title of this pamphlet begins, "The Riddle of the Religions....", and its aim is to find a solution for this riddle, to find an answer to the real challenge and problem for Christian faith presented by the existence and increasing influence in both East and West of "genuine, living, self-assured non-Christian religion".

Christianity is one religion among many, and other religions show so many striking formal similarities to it that we are compelled to face the question, "Do all religions have something *essential* in common?" There have been three typical answers to this question, the author suggests. First, "Basically every religion says the same thing". Second, "The religions form a whole as manifestations of the ascending religious development of the human race". And third, "The differences between the religions are such that they can never be overcome, but in their practical religious experience they stand side by side in unity". To each of these answers serious objections are raised.

Freytag next considers three views of "the special quality of Christianity as one religion among many". These are "Imperfection-Perfection", "Longing-Fulfilment", and "the Triple Relationship: Christianity—the Gospel—alien religions". According to this third view, Christianity and all other religions are in polar relationship to the Gospel. The religions stand over against the way of God to man as "man's attempt to master the Eternal". Although this view is much closer to the author's own theological position, he concludes, "This answer does not give us any peace..... Is everything in the religions only God forsakenness and rebellion?" Is there no human element of good, no saving strength in them?

Freytag then turns to "The Biblical Answer", or more accurately, one particular aspect of that "answer", the concept of "the Gentiles" and its bearing on the Christian understanding of religion. The concept of "religions" is unknown to the Bible; the nearest approach to this idea is contained in what it says about the Gentiles.

The Gentiles represent the negative counter-concept to "the chosen people", but in the course of the Scriptures the idea of the Gentiles is transformed. In the Old Testament they are first represented as the servants of other gods, then as the servants of the anti-Gods, and finally as those who also belong to the one true God and will ultimately, after judgment, be saved by Him. In the first three gospels, the Gentiles appear as a counter-image to Israel and throw relief on Israel's sin. Faith, the decisive factor, is also possible for the Gentiles. After Pentecost, just as the concept of Israel becomes divorced from the historical people, so the concept of the Gentiles becomes divorced from that of the Peoples. The calling of the Gentiles is a sign of the present dominion of Christ and of future fulfilment. This transformation in the concept of the Gentiles is not a development of human perception. It is the events of the story of salvation which change the situation.

The heathen are those for whom God has acted and still acts. They are the people whom God has created, to whom He testifies to Himself, and whom He preserves with a view to their deliverance. But God's saving action has not yet reached them; they live in opposition to God, and the heathen man is the man apart from Christ.

Freytag sees the following consequences of this Biblical concept of the Gentiles for our understanding of the religions. First, the new reality that has come in Christ ....."is something completely new and different, which has no analogy in this world, and which therefore cannot be compared with anything else." In the Bible there is therefore no trace of comparison between religions, and there is thus also no "answer to the question whether there was any salvation in heathendom before Christ."

Second, "the New Testament is not concerned with the religions, but with man." "His religion is the sphere in which he lives, and perhaps the stage furnishing behind which he hides, but it is not the man himself." So while the New Testament does not compare religions, it does describe religious man "in the mirror of what Christ has done for him." In the light of Christ, the risen sun, "it becomes clear that the religious man lives in a strange contraditcion," both "pious" and "without God," and this is a real contradiction, not a case of "both-and". It can no more be separated than can God's grace and judgment. Man lives in his religion because he knows that he depends on God. It is because God does not let him go that he cannot manage without Him. His religion rests upon this fact. "That is why he knows that his life runs along the frontier. Sorrow, sin, and death are the reality of his life." But in this situation, man exchanges God for his own gods. "In his trouble he does not want to be fully dependent upon God, but introduces means of his own which are intended to help him." Man knows of a law, but he "makes it easy for himself in order to assert himself in face of the law." He sets limits to his own responsibility and then proceeds to formulate the conditions for his own forgiveness. God's patience causes man to run up against creaturely limits and keeps him within bounds of common humanity, but God's wrath grants man his self-assertion. According to the testimony of the Bible, there is "no religious awareness without God, neither is there any religious attitude which is not..... unmasked as self-assertion."

The New Testament also speaks of something more than man's self-assertion. It speaks of the powers, the dæmonic background to religious life. First, "a man's religious life imprisons him against Christ." Second, "a man uses the good he knows to cover up the evil he surely feels." Third, this "dæmonic element....is actually a force with which man can achieve something." The dæmonic lives from God's power against God. "The things given by God are used against God." All three aspects of the influence of the "powers" on religion apply to Christianity as well as to other religions. It is only in Christ that this danger is overcome; it is "only before Him that we are preserved from the Christian religion that makes us immune to Him." "Christianity and the religions have two things in common namely: both refer to God and both are a prey to the same temptation." True Christian tolerance excludes presumption and may sometimes force us to acknowledge that our "sins are greater than those of the Gentiles." But we must not fail to witness to Christ as something more and something different from the human reactions to God's divine being which constitute the religions.

J. B. C.

Revelation and Religion (*Studies in the Theological Interpretation of Religious Types*), By Herbert H. Farmer (Harper and Brothers), New York, Price $3.50. (*c.* 1954). (Gifford Lectures, First Series, delivered in 1950). Pp. 243.

Professor Farmer first sets forth his four main assumptions. First, he assumes the truth of the Christian affirmation: "God has made unique and final revelation of Himself as personal in history through Jesus Christ and through the personal relationship to Himself which that revelation makes possible and calls into being." Second, he assumes that "there is underlying all genuinely religious phenomena a common defining essence of some sort." The essence of religion is living religion, "religion as it continually and spontaneously springs up in the soul of man." Third, he assumes that "wherever Religion in this sense arises in human experience it does so at the point where ultimate reality impinges on the human spirit." In contrast to all kinds of naturalistic theories, he assumes that "religion is *not* fundamentally an illusion, though of course there may be almost any degree of falsehood and illusion mixed up in it." Fourth, he assumes that "whenever religion arises with some degree of spontaneous, creative, living power, it does so because at that point ultimate reality is disclosing itself as personal to man." Living, essential religion is God's personal encounter with man, and being personal, it involves activity on both sides.

"The living essence of religion is revealed once and for all, in its sole perfect manifestation, in the Christian revelation and in the relation with God which that revelation makes possible for men, and is exemplified in other religions in varying degrees of incompleteness, fragmentariness, distortion and perversion. In other words, *there is given to us through the Christian revelation the normative concept of religion*: the personal encounter of God with man and of man with God."

"In our endeavour to penetrate to the living essence of religion we frankly begin within the sphere of Christian religious experience in which we ourselves, as Christian philosophers of religion, share at first hand." "We seek to grasp the essential elements in the specifically Christian encounter with, and apprehension of, God as personal. We propose to do this by examining the distinctively Christian act of worship." The focal point in Christian worship is "the faith that Jesus Christ is God incarnate." Therefore we must "explore what it means, *in terms of worship itself*, to make Christ its focal centre." The analysis of Christian worship

discloses that there are seven elements in the Christian apprehension of God. They are that God is "ontologically other," "axiologically other," "personal," "asking all," "giving all," and "intimately present and active within the worshipper's own being." The seventh element is "*a feeling-tone*, pervading the whole awareness, akin to awe, but *sui generis*." These elements are "distinguishable in analysis, but not separable from one another in the experience itself."

Farmer then takes "the concept thus defined into the midst of historical reality' to see whether it can successfully be used to elucidate and interpret religious facts. He does so assuming that God's initiative in making a personal approach to men is not confined to the Christian revelation but is "at work behind and within the whole religious history of mankind." Wherever God thus calls into existence living religion, "*all* the elements which the analysis of Christian worship has revealed will *tend* to be present together." On this presumption he can discriminate between what is essentially religious and what is not, and he can make a classification of religious types.

Much of primitive religion, such as animism, totemism, and ancestor worship, is not essentially religious, Farmer maintains. What is genuinely religious is the faint sense "of having to deal with a higher, mysterious personal Will and Power." Polytheism grasps the truth that God is personal and that He meets man "in relation to his actual tasks and situations in this present natural and historical environment."

The classification of other religions is based on the first six of the seven basic elements of Christian experience. In Christian worship they are "knit together in a co-ordinate balance and unity with one another." Other forms of living religion "are imperfect and distorted manifestations of the full and unitary relation to God as personal which is alone realised, or at least realizable, in the Christian revelation and experience, the imperfection and distortion consisting in the fact that in them the balanced unity of the elements is not achieved. One or other of the elements as it were breaks loose and obtains a position of obsessive dominance." Thus a typology of dominant religious elements can be set up and illustrated from the history of empirical Christianity as well as from other religions. The main types are: "the religion of absolute dependence" (Taoism, Islam), "the religion of ideal values" (Platonism), "the religion of introversion" (Mysticism), "the religion of obligation" (Confucianism, Stoicism, 18th Century Deism), "eudæmonistic religion" (*Bhakti*).

Farmer is concerned in this book with "the specifically *Christian* theological interpretation of religion.....from the standpoint of the distinctive Christian revelation and faith which are the basis of Christian Theology" or "from the standpoint of Incarnation." He is trying to contribute to a "Christian theistic world-view by a study of the fact of religion in the life of mankind." He believes that it is philosophically legitimate to introduce a Christian category provided that it be treated as a hypothesis which "is to be justified only by the extent to which it can be incorporated into a coherent world-view." But while Christian theism overlaps considerably with general theistic philosophy, it must be "a theism of incarnation and reconciliation, frankly christological and soteriological."

J. B. C.

The Preacher's Task and the Stone of Stumbling, By D. T. Niles, Lutterworth, London, Price. 12 *sh.* 6 *d.* (*c.* 1958. The Lyman Beecher Lectures for 1957). Pp. 107.

These lectures are concerned with the content of preaching and the relation of the preacher to the hearer, but they are of special interest to us because both the preacher's task and the "Stone of Stumbling" are set in relation to men of the three major non-Christian religions, who are our neighbours here in Southern Asia. It is, however, with the fourth lecture that we are directly concerned, since it deals with "the question of the relation between Christianity and other religions."

Niles first outlines "five distinct points of view on this subject which have found vigorous expression in recent theological debate." The wide differences between them "raise the question as to whether those who partake in this discussion are sufficiently agreed on what the discussion should be about." The author therefore seeks to discover "why Christians, who are equally committed to the Church's task of proclaiming the gospel, find themselves in such sharp disagreement."

Niles defines the Christian component in the discussion as "the Christian gospel or message" and the non-Christian component as the "non-Christian world," the world of nature and of persons in manifold relationships, containing systems of life and thought. "The world is non-Christian only in a historical sense. It is already in God's purpose a world for which Jesus died and over which he rules." Even the many who have not accepted and still refuse to accept him as their Lord and Saviour "are within the rule and saving work of Christ." "The discussion is not about the relation between the religion, or the religious life, of Christians and that of those who are not Christians; nor is it about the relation between the religious beliefs of Christians and the beliefs of those who are not Christians." "In the final analysis, the 'relation' which we are seeking to understand is a relation established by Jesus himself."

When the gospel is proclaimed, the proclamation bears witness to the activity of Christ seeking those other sheep who already belong to him, and it is with this activity that it seeks to co-operate. "God is busy with man. He made man in His own image. He made man in such a way that man lives by 'imaging' God. This also means, therefore, that God is always 'toward' man, seeking to evoke man's glad response. It is not necessary for us to define or describe the ways in which God's business with man has been exercised, it is enough to know that that business has been there." God is previous to the evangelist "in the life of the person whom he is seeking to win for the gospel, and also previous to him in whatever area of life he is seeking to make the gospel effective."

What happens, then, when the gospel is proclaimed? To answer this question we must describe the activity of God in the world, and this "can be set out within four different frames of thought."

First, there is God in His activity "to win men to live in fellowship with Him." "Whether men are engaged in flight from God or search for God or acceptance of God (and all men are involved in all these three attitudes at the same time), they are, in all these things, reacting to the action of God upon them in His work of salvation. No man's religion and no religious system is purely a product of man." The image of God has been distorted by sin, but God persists in standing before the broken mirror, which therefore still reflects a broken and distorted image of Him. Jesus is the fulfilment of God's work, not merely with Israel, but with humanity. "He died for

all men. He seeks all men. He rules over all men. He is judge of all men. Hence the Christian message is proclaimed to all men."

There are those who already have "faith" to whom this proclamation is made. They are "those who have not consciously accepted God in Christ, but who nevertheless in some measure respond truly to God's action on them". But "even they are in need of the challenge of gospel and their faith can be both a preparation and a hindrance to finding faith in Jesus Christ." "The actual living process of men finding faith in Jesus Christ is not a process that can be described according to one pattern." The attempt to do so is often simply the effort of Christian students of other religions to find out how "the knowledge of these religions relates itself to their Christian faith." Some find they can move from Christian faith to an understanding of other religions without being conscious of a break in thought; others find themselves unable to avoid this break, and still others find it impossible to establish any relation between their Christian faith and their understanding of other religions.

The *second and third aspects of God's activity* are closely related. They are "*to reveal to men His true nature and purpose*" and "*to create for Himself a people who will be His instrument in the world.*" God made witness to Himself the central concern of his dealings with a particular people. His intention was to raise a people who would be the messengers of salvation. This is what Niles called God's "activity of revelation", and like His activity of salvation, it reaches its fulfilment in Jesus Christ and becomes effective and meaningful for all men. The Church is the instrument in history which witnesses to the world of this fulfilment of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. "God not only seeks to save but also seeks participants in His work of salvation." The demand set before those who find faith in Jesus Christ is that they repent and be baptized, that they become members of the Christian community. The Christian message presents the issue of man's response to God's desire to use him. God is asking for fellow workers with Jesus who "must be known as belonging to Jesus Christ and to no one else." The preacher must make this call known, a call which demands a simple and unequivocal answer.

The relation between Christian and non-Christian faith in terms of God's activity of salvation must "be expressed dialectically in terms of continuity and discontinuity." The relation between the Christian and non-Christian communities in terms of God's activity of revelation has to be expressed "in terms of the distinctiveness and newness of the Christian community as the bearer of God's revelation." "Now we speak of the relation between the message which the Christian community proclaims and the beliefs which others hold. Here we see that there is true and essential discontinuity. The Christian message cannot be grafted upon other beliefs or added to them." It can only be accepted by radical conversion. There is no connection religiously, though there is always one psychologically, "between one's obedience to Jesus Christ and any other attitude of mind or spirit which preceded it." "The man in Christ is a new man."

Fourth, "*the activity of God will find its fulfilment when He brings all things under the headship of Christ.*" The world at present is in the process of fulfilment so that, looking at the process, it is impossible to describe it in any simple way. "Th very intricacy of the process lends truth to all the various types of assertions made about those relations which are the result of the Christian message being active in a non-Christian world." "That is why, in this whole discussion, there can be no way of arriving at agreed positions. The discussion can never be left within any one of the areas we have sought to define. These areas interpenetrate one another. If they

did not, the discussion would be futile anyway; and, because they do, those involved in the discussion must necessarily speak about different things." "In a discussion about the Christian message in a non-Christian world we must speak about all these things. We shall not, therefore, always agree in what we say. But we shall have helped to make clear why we are engaged in this discussion at all. We have been entrusted with a commission. The task of the preacher demands that we seek to understand what happens when the gospel is proclaimed."

The Call of the Jagadguru. By P. Sankaranarayanan. Ganesh & Co., Madras. Price Rs. 4, 1958, Pp. 244.

This is a collection of discourses by His Holiness Sri Jagadguru Sankaracharya of Kanchi, the Jagadguru of Kamakoti Pitham. They were originally delivered in Tamil after Temple worship to large audiences. Translated into English by Professor P. Sankaranarayanan of Vivekananda College, Madras, they have been put together in a handy volume. Although the various themes dealt with in these addresses cover a vast area, there is no doubt that underlying the whole preaching mission of the Jagadguru is the intention to call the present generation of Hindu intellectuals to give serious thought to the claims of their ancestral faith and traditional practices.

The Jagadguru maintains that the fundamental need today is for a study of the Vedas which are the foundations of the *Sanatana Dharma.* For this reason he also pleads for a study of the original Sanskrit, because the Vedas should be preserved in Sanskrit and not in translations however helpful. The words of the Scriptures have to be *heard* and not merely *read.* That is why the insistence on *Vedadhyayana.* Moreover, the Vedas are intended, "not merely for intellectual understanding; they must govern our daily life and conduct and take us to higher levels of spirituality. They must guide us in our *karmanusthanam*, *tapas*, *isvararadhana*, etc. and help us by those means to obtain the grace of God both for our own individual welfare and for the welfare of the whole world." This responsibility is a special privilege of the Brahmins, and he has been keenly interested in persuading young Brahmins to seriously consider giving time and thought to equipping themselves in order to be able to read and expound the Vedas.

The second great concern of the Jagadguru is to bring about a revival in the practices (*anusthanas*) of Hinduism. "The foundation of our religion," he writes, "as of any other religion, is fidelity to the observances prescribed in it. In this *samsara*, which tosses us hither and thither, we must have something to hold on to in order to keep it steady. Some *mantram*, some *japam*, some *anusthanam* is necessary to sustain and uplift us. We should habituate ourselves to observing at least some part of the religious practices of our ancestors. Then there will be no danger of our sliding into wrong and un-approved ways of life. We shall save ourselves and in the process save others too. If each one of us follows the right path, all will be well with the world. If all is not now well with the world, it is due to our sin, to our disregard of the prescribed practices of our religion."

The tragedy is that the meaning behind these religious practices is not properly understood. People have come to accept the view that a great deal of Hindu *anusthanas* consist of superstitions which are a carry-over of early unscientific culture. On the other hand, performed with faith they prepare the way for God-realization. They make for *chitta-suddhi*—purity of mind—and *ekagratha*—power of concentration.

The third emphasis is laid upon the need for enforcing the recognition of the essential unity of Hinduism, a position which is characteristic of all modern Advaitins. Their anxiety is to claim that the various sectarian forms of Hinduism are all essentially forms of the basic *Sanatana Dharma.* In particular the plea is for recognition of the underlying unity between Saivites and Vaishnavites. So the contention: "The Tiruppavar-Tiruvembavai movement is intended to bring about this harmony among sects in the Hindu fold. The different sectarian systems of India, such as the *Sakti* Cult, Saivism, and Vaishnavism all radiate from one central idea of unity. Before we preach the ideal of universal religion let us set our house in order and attain religious harmony within our fold. It is only a virile resurgent Hinduism that can make an effective contribution to the true universal religion."

Nevertheless within the *Sanatana Dharma.* there need not be uniformity. What is important is unity: there can be unity in diversity. Therefore, he urges his hearers to follow each his own traditional religion with the fervour and devotion due to it. As a corollary, he goes on to point out at the same time that there is no need for anyone to give up one's religion in order to adopt another. For, that would be *apachara.* Sin in conversion is not so much in going to a new religion as in giving up the old religion in which one was born. "Even to ask a Saivite to turn a Vaishnavite or *vice versa* is also wrong. Inviting to join a new religion is a sin against God who is common to the old religion as to the new. The God of all religions and all religious denominations is the same."

A fourth emphasis is the imperative need for a revival of Hindu worship. As the Hindu way of life is basically sacramental, the *samskaras* are constant reminders of the worshipful attitude which should run through the entire life of man and society. The Jagadguru appeals to the Hindu intellectual to resuscitate the various *samskaras*, in conscious knowledge not only of their rationale but also of their significance for the spiritual growth of the individual. This can only be when there is conscious awareness of the reality of God in all worship. He says, "God is not pleased with one who merely performs *karmas* without devotion to Him or with one who only praises Him doing nothing else. Both these, *stotra* and *karma*, are necessary. *Stotra* is not for God's pleasure. By it we remember Him in our joys and sorrows to evoke and deserve His grace. We should perform the duties that have been prescribed for our daily life, and also be filled with devotion to God. Whatever action we do must be performed not for our benefit or pleasure, but in a spirit of dedication to God."

In this treatment of the *Sanatana Dharma*, the underlying assumption is that it is ultimately based upon a theological theory and a metaphysic which can be only described as *Advaita.* All religious thought and practice ultimately lead to the conclusion that the basis and origin is the ultimate Brahman, however, that may be conceived. For practical purposes, however, especially so far as the popular mind is concerned the worship of God (and of gods) is not only valid but is in accordance with the essential teaching of *Advaita.* For *karma*, *bhakti* and *jnana* are all the same.

Hence the importance of *Bhagavad Gita* as the most important scripture of modern Hinduism. The *Gita* is not only the best text-book of *Advaita:* it is the clearest proof of the catholicity of the Hindu faith which comprehends and includes within its ever-widening bounds the religious hopes and aspirations as well as the diverse understandings of fundamental doctrines of Hinduism in all its forms. Moreover the *Gita* interpretation of *Advaita* is in a remarkable way contemporary.

Its teachings meet the modern conditions of life, so different from those in which the original counsel was given by Krishna and Arjuna.

This brings us to briefly consider the Jagadguru's attitude to changing times. While on the one hand, he expresses concern that the new tempo of life now-a-days has made for complexity, creating innumerable needs which clamour for attention, there is possibility, in spite of it all, for a certain simplicity of life and austerity in everyday living. These two admonitions run right through the teachings of the Jagadguru: pleading for a simplification of life, on the one hand; and for a certain discipline in the ordering of our lives, on the other. This is stressed in an appeal such as: "Everyone should set apart half an hour or one hour at least once a week for doing manual labour for a common cause..... By such a physical labour people will shed their vanity and egoism and develop a feeling of oneness with others. Their minds will thereby be disciplined and cleansed of impurities, be in a proper condition to receive and enshrine the *Paramatma*, which is the ultimate purpose of life."

Referring to prevailing class conflicts, he rightly points out that we should carefully consider what makes for these conflicts, and not jump to the conclusion that the abolition of caste by itself would result in the eradication of the conflicts among groups of people. How best can we establish in the minds of all men alike the guiding principle "*sarve jano sukhino bhavanti*—the happiness of all should be our guiding principle." Therefore, it is maintained that one should lay greater emphasis upon his obligations to society, his duties as a citizen, his responsibilities as a member of whatever fellowship he belongs to, rather than think in terms of his rights and privileges, seeking to establish his own private interests or that of his group at the expense of other people. So he says, "Arrogance of caste superiority is a sin according to our *Sastras:* Caste indicates duties and everyone ought to do the duties that pertain to his caste with humility and devotion and not pride himself on his caste."

This is not altogether an appeal to conscience. While the individuals judgment is certainly one of the valid sources for decisive action in all social relationships, the appeal is also made for an adequate understanding of scriptural injunctions. It is pointed out that both in the *Sruti* and in the *Smriti*, there is guidance. for modern man in all situations which call for ethical decision. This note is in some sense modern in that the claim is not that the scriptures lay down the law, but that they provide the criteria for judgment which give us guidance about right conduct.

Finally the relevancy of the message of this modern representative of Vedantic orthodoxy, the 68th in succession to the original see of the great Sankaracharya, is summed up in the remarkable message which he gave on the occasion of the Golden Jubliee celebration his elevation to the *Kamakoti Pitham.* "We should utilize to good purpose the days of our life-time. We should engage ourselves in acts which will contribute to the welfare of others and to our own upliftment.... We must reflect on how best to spend the remainder of our days, not merely by our own individual effort, but with the help of others. Any purpose will be properly and fully executed only with the co-operation of others. Everybody is agreed that we should aim at universal welfare, that none should have any affliction, that all should be happy and that no one should suffer for any want. That is what people of all countries and adherent of all parties devoutly desire. Every party says that it strives for the greatest happiness of the greatest number."

P. D. D.

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